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The

VERDICT *of* BRIDLEGOOSE

By the Same Author

*

EBONY AND IVORY
THIRTEEN WORTHIES
BLACK LAUGHTER
SKIN FOR SKIN

etc.

The
VERDICT of BRIDLEGOOSE
by
Llewelyn Powys



London
Jonathan Cape 30 Bedford Square

1927

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Literature Dept.

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*Dedicated
to
Edna St. Vincent Millay,
a leprechaun
among poets*

I OBSERVE, gentlemen, in this Bridlegoose, several things, which induce me to represent before you, that it is my opinion that he should be pardoned. In the first place, his old age. Secondly, his simplicity. To both which qualities our statute and common laws, civil and municipal together, allow many excuses for any slips or escapes, which, through the invincible imperfection of either, have been inconsiderately stumbled upon by a person so qualified. Thirdly, gentlemen, I must needs display before you another case, which in equity and justice, maketh much for the advantage of Bridlegoose ; to wit, that this one, sole, and single fault of his ought to be quite forgotten, abolished and swallowed up by that immense and vast ocean of just awards and sentences which heretofore he hath given and pronounced ; his demeanour, for these forty years and upwards, that he hath been a judge, having been so evenly balanced in the scales of uprightness, that envy itself, till now, could not have been so impudent as to accuse and twit him with any act worthy of a check or reprobation. As, if a drop of the sea were thrown into the Loire none could perceive, or say, that, by this single drop, the whole river should be salt and brackish.

The third book of Rabelais' Works

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The
VERDICT *of* BRIDLEGOOSE

DISCONTENT

NEVER had I experienced a deeper discontent than I felt in my father's house at Weymouth after my return from Africa. Suddenly I found myself deprived of the two principal props upon which human happiness depends—work and love. I had escaped from the shores of Lake Elmenteita in the hope that I should be able to make a fresh start at writing ; but how could I call it writing, this perpetual concentration upon manuscripts that were never published ? Whenever I took up my pen a heavy melancholy weighed me down. “ Had not I, in my time, heard lions roar ? ” The consciousness that I had escaped from my labours merely to discover myself edged into the position of an ineffectual literary dilettante filled me with disgust. Indeed, so obsessed did I grow with the sense of my personal futility that I even became indifferent to the simple and beautiful glimpses of life that surrounded me on every side. I, the lover of life, the son of the sun, became a renegade and remained unmoved before what I had always held most dear. In the autumn, as I passed Lodmoor, I would see the fishermen drawing their nets out of the sea, and walk on inattentive. The sight of cormorants, flying with outstretched necks toward the wave-washed promontories near the White Nore, meant nothing to me ; the colour of the rushes in the dykes, lit up by the last rays of the sun as it went down behind the Chesil beach, nothing ; the winter stars shining at midnight upon the

The Verdict of Bridlegoose backs of Dorset sheep, asleep on Dorset downs, less than nothing.

I do not think, however, that I would have been foolish enough to have allowed my hurt vanity to work this ill upon me had I been in a position to draw happiness from that other great human consolation, but to be denied all amorous delights ! When I was dressing I would look into the mirror and see tiny wrinkles about my eyes and grey hairs appearing over my temples, and this would throw me into a mood of the deepest dejection. It was as though in that neat bathroom, so white, so compact, so well-appointed, God had all at once taken it into His head to give me a tip, to whisper into my ear that I had no time to waste. Of course I realised perfectly well the cause of my predicament. Nothing else, in fact, than that it was my misfortune to belong to, to have been born into, the English middle class. For after all, what a terrible class it is ; merely to have occasional intercourse with the people who belong to it is awful enough, but to be born one of them ! It is like finding oneself in an enormous wire trap unable to get out. You can get in ; anybody can get in, *but you can't get out*. I used to lie on my bed in torment, and during these midnight vigils it would seem to me that amorous dalliance was the one thing that mattered in life, that the complete and utter gratification of one's most lively whim was, in truth, the only real and abiding good to be found on earth. And then I would reflect that the bulls with brass rings in their noses, the stallions with bands round their bellies, were in better case than I. Why, the very sparrows in the gutter, the very mice squealing and romping in the wainscot-tunnels of my father's house, were

refreshed a thousand times more often. On many *Discontent* an evening during that summer, as I sat smoking after dinner at the open window while the table was being cleared of the brittle red remnants of the lobsters that had just been eaten, I would suffer an agony of jealousy as I watched boys and girls in a never-ending stream pass to and fro along the esplanade. I would find myself intensely, exquisitely sensitive to the pulse and rhythm of life, and yet know all the while that by some wretched cast of the dice I was doomed to remain, perforce, outside, like a sheep with a splash of tar on its tail, who is not allowed to mix with the flock. And all the time there would come in through the open window that enervating seaside smell, suggestive of rattling egg-shaped pebbles, of painted row-boats lying bottom upwards, of tennis-shoes made warm by the delicate sandy feet of young girls. I used certainly to undergo very strange inarticulate emotions by that wide-open bow-window, emotions that would seem to acquire something of the eternal, and yet be contained in the short space of time that lay between the removal of the lobster-shells and the brushing away of the crumbs.

In July, I went to Southampton to meet my brother John, who was returning from the United States for a holiday. As we sat together on the wharf he asked me whether I would not consider going back with him to America. I answered without hesitation that I would go back with him. Had not I been feeling for the last twelve-month that it was high time for me to be setting out on my travels again, to be setting out on my travels for a new jungle? I had no

The Verdict of Bridlegoose mind to remain any longer under my father's protection, cooped up like a prize hen. I would rather starve, I thought, in a garret of New York City than live so mean a life.

TENTATIVE OVERTURES

I SET sail for America with the vaguest idea as to what I intended to do. I had lost every penny I possessed from investments in German marks. My plans for the future were most fanciful. Sometimes I imagined that I might become a salesman, sometimes I dreamed of success in business through the influence of some benevolent magnate. It seemed quite obvious that I could never hope to make a living out of writing. How could I expect to do so when all that I wrote remained unpublished?

Of course, my best chance of earning a livelihood lay in taking up some kind of scholastic employment; but then I hated teaching, and accepted it as a good omen when my Cambridge cap and gown and woolly bachelor's hood, which I had strapped to the outside of my Gladstone bag, were lost at the dock on my landing.

My brother and sister lived at this time in an apartment on Twenty-first Street, opposite the Theological Seminary, and it was here that I stayed for six months, endeavouring, as best I might, to adapt myself to my new environment.

Not long after my arrival I visited an employment agent in the down-town section of New York. It was with a feeling of extreme trepidation that I found myself one afternoon moving through the shadowed canyons of this part of the city. I felt as lost and terrified as an ant might feel, which, fallen from the basket of a Sunday "hiker," finds itself advancing over a grassless, mouldless floor, without hope of sustenance or friendly shelter. At

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last I reached the office I sought. It was at the top of an enormous building. After waiting in a queue for half an hour my turn came to be interviewed. I said that I wanted any kind of work. A competent young man with well-brushed hair regarded me for a moment with an assessing eye. He asked me for my past history. I told him that I had taken a degree at Cambridge and had been a stock-rancher in East Africa. "I am sorry we can do nothing for you," he said, and nodded to the man behind me, who was already, with nervous, trembling fingers, taking from his pocket certain papers. I went out of the door feeling that my current value was exactly nothing. The corridor outside was empty, and my sense of incompetence was still further augmented by the fact that I had no idea what to do to persuade the elevator to stop and carry me away from the long, deserted gallery which I found so unspeakably depressing. Once I saw a red light glow out above one of the prison-gates, but before I had time to reach it the descending cage had disappeared smoothly and rapidly into an alarming hollow depth.

It was after this experience that I seriously considered accepting a job offered me by a firm of Philadelphia undertakers. I knew that in Africa the task of consorting with the dead was allocated to the lowest pariahs ; and as my value in America seemed exactly nought, it appeared to be an occupation to which I might with some show of justification aspire. Besides, how the profession would jump with my abnormal preoccupation with all matters that have to do with mortality, and what philosophic insight I might gain into the wild,

quivering, uncertain manners of life as I paid midnight visits to each new "silent room of sorrow!" Long afterwards, whenever I walked down Eighth Avenue, past my savings bank, past the three golden balls of Uncle Ben's pawn-shop, my attention would always be arrested by the illuminated words, *Stephen Merritt, Undertaker.* And when I came abreast of the establishment I could never resist peering into the dark recesses of the sober, heavily carpeted room, where, at a polished desk, furnished with a telephone, under a bearded bust that suggested the head of Æschylus, sat a representative of the firm, awaiting the next call. And as I continued on my way along the crowded, garish street, I would half persuade myself that I envied this black-befrocked gentleman, who, with his feet resting on an ebony ottoman, appeared to be reading with such absorbed attention, Shirlock upon death. For night and day, as I walked these crowded thoroughfares, I would scan with astonishment the faces of the citizens of New York City, citizens who always appeared so busily employed, so capable, and so prosperous. How did it come about, I wondered, that all these people possessed the faculty of adapting themselves to the requirements of an age for the meanest demands of which I myself felt so entirely unfitted!

One afternoon, as I sauntered up Fifth Avenue, engaged in this favourite pastime, each new set of features presenting itself to my attention, insistent and emphatic, only to disappear a moment later into an uncharted oblivion, like the masks of so many quick souls passing like butterflies to a frivolous doom, some very queer and very shameless imaginings entered my head. I would be perfectly willing,

I thought, to accept the most ambiguous position in the world in the households of some of these charming women, if by such means I could receive a dole of bread and butter. Hardly had this ingenuous reflection taken up its abode in my head, in the head of a simple countryman who knows exactly how to find the nest of a false lapwing, or how to extract a rabbit from its hole with a bramble, than I received a sharp cut across my face, as though some omniscient moralist had struck me with a wire whip, and I awoke from my equivocal dreams to realise that I had collided with an energetic Jew and had sent his sharp-edged straw hat rolling like a quoit across the sidewalk. This encounter took place exactly opposite the Public Library, exactly opposite the place where those two lions are couched, who, with simpering, complacent expressions so different from any expressions I have observed on the countenance of any real lion, contemplate with unshut eye, for ever and aye, the strutting, artificial figures that pass before them.

It was now that somebody gave me a letter of introduction to a celebrated journalist. I went to see him, nursing the hope that as he was an Englishman, and a graduate of John's College, Cambridge, he might put me in the way of doing some literary work. I timidly knocked at the door of his office, a door that had his name printed upon it, and entered to find a tall, good-natured, heavily built man, in shirt-sleeves, sitting at a desk. He had at one time been a member of Parliament, in the Liberal interest, and had since been making a living by writing gossipy articles about well-known English politicians, the information that he was in a position to impart, and his method of imparting it, being

exactly suited to the taste of the readers of the *Tentative Overtures* Magazine Sections of the more important New York newspapers. Mr. —— treated me with generous civility, asking me to come and lunch with him at his club. During this meal I was aware of being under *his* assessing eye, and when he asked me as a test question what I thought of the Irish situation, and discovered that I thought nothing about it, I was conscious, painfully conscious, as I ate my mutton-chop, of his estimation of me having dropped very many degrees. “ My advice to you, young man,” he said presently, “ is to go West.” It would be a mistake for the reader to suppose that I myself had not been forming my own shy conclusions about the character and taste of my host, as I sat at the heavy mahogany table, and learnt how interested Mr. —— was in all that had to do with the life of our Saviour, and listened to him chaffing his son, who was a keen philatelist, about stamps “ simply adhering to him,” or indeed bandying cheerful jocularities with the doorkeeper as to the exact date when, by an unwritten law, straw hats were supposed to disappear from the street. We parted outside the club, and I never saw him again, though for many years I used to read with no small envy his articles on men and affairs and marvel to myself at his amazing capacity for understanding and explaining each “ new situation ” as it arose.

After this luncheon I returned to my brother’s room. He at once did all he could to influence me toward trying to make a living in New York City by writing. “ Now that Mr. —— has told you to go West, I should most certainly make up my mind to stay East,” he said. However, I dare say I should never have tried to make my living by writing, if it

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of Bridlegoose* had not been for Miss Mary Siegrist, who assured me that I would find no difficulty in doing so, going even so far as to give me a letter of introduction to Mr. Dounce, of the New York *Evening Post*. As the years passed I saw less and less of Mary Siegrist, but I never forget the kindness she showed me at this critical juncture in my life, or feel anything but admiration for a certain lyrical quality in her poetry, a quality which can never be wholly destroyed, however assiduously she may associate herself with tiresome people and tiresome women's clubs. Armed with her letter I presented myself at the office of her friend. Mr. Dounce, a clever young man, treated me then, as always, with extreme courtesy, asking me to write some vignettes of Africa. The first sketch I wrote was entitled "A Porcupine in a Kitchen," and I received for it just three dollars and seventy-five cents.

HERRING-GULLS

FOR my health's sake I used to sleep on the roof, carrying my blankets up through a trap-door. It would be a hard matter to convey how liberating to my spirit I found this practice to be. Life in a great modern city can in an extraordinary way traduce one's mind into accepting as reality the illusion of each feverish, fleeting day, and it is only by having certain hours set apart for the persuasion of a more sensitive and profound consciousness that one can hope to keep one's soul clear. To emerge through a little trap-door to find myself alone with fresh night-wandering clouds, alone with the cozening moon and a myriad isolated stars never failed to restore my being to that fortunate state of awareness which alone would seem to justify our existence, in contrast with the existence of the beasts of the field. When it rained I would wake and go into the house, but when snow fell I would often continue to sleep, opening my eyes at dawn to find the old, dusty, crumbling chimneys, each one of which had become as familiar to me as the pear-trees in the back-yard at home, rising out of a little square lawn of unsmutched nativity snow. To return from some crowded drawing-room, where I had been listening, it may be, to Amy Lowell reading her poetry, reading "Patterns," and to see, at the hour before dawn, herring-gulls, one after the other, with deliberate flight, cross from horizon to horizon over the Island City, was to experience a most rare subjective release.

I remember well the particular party I have in

mind—Amy Lowell enthroned on a high-backed chair, smoking her cigar and eyeing the company with the aggressive, narrow eye of some high-pedigreed bird, whose narrow head is large enough to contain only two thoughts, herself and her own expensive eggs. It always seemed to me that Miss Lowell's personality was far superior to her poetry. She had the kind of bad manners which by their effrontery become good manners. “I am glad that you are not your brother,” she said to me that evening, when I was introduced to her. And, in truth, the difference between my brother John's nature, incalculable as the nature of a “plumed serpent,” and Amy Lowell's nature, so pectinated and emphatic, could hardly be exaggerated.

There were many people of interest at this particular gathering. Lola Ridge was there to read some of her verse, and it was amusing to watch the undisguised hauteur on the face of Miss Lowell, as she listened to the poetry of her rival. I had met Lola Ridge a few days before, in the rooms of Evelyn Scott, and both my brother and I had been impressed by the beauty of her face, like the impassive death-mask of a saint. Evelyn Scott kept green little paroquets in a hutch at the back of a darkened garret; and afterwards, when I read the writings of this gifted woman, I always associated these same paroquets, their testy temperaments and beaks sharp as darning-needles, with the bitter, nipping style of their attractive mistress. But for all my professed alertness I must have been singularly stupid and unobservant at this party; for while the recitations were taking place, there was sitting next to me, so I learnt afterwards, a very distinguished person, and one whose deep nature

and exceptional ability I was, at a later time, to *Herring-*
come to value highly indeed. As it was, I sat on a *Gulls*
low divan, giving attention to everybody else. I
observed Professor Crane and his wife. I always
liked the Professor, and he was always kind to me,
albeit it cannot be denied that in his critical writing
he is a little inclined to balance himself with edifying
adroitness on the fence. Behind the Professor sat
Mr. Scofield Thayer, dressed immaculately, with
his head resting on his hand, but at the same time
tilted upward, so that I was able to catch a glimpse,
against the delightful swan-like curve of a young
girl's bare shoulder, of an expression, superb in its
supercilious fastidiousness, as with immobile ivory
features he listened to what was being repeated.
This young man came to represent for me, as I
knew him better, a most admirable type of American.
Courteous, cultured, illustrious, he seemed to
suggest in each attitude he took, in each movement
he made, that most fortunate state wherein the
vulgar, material resources of the world have been
compelled to minister, whether they liked it or not,
to every form of æsthetic expression. A little to
the left of this incomparable arbiter, with his smile
of indulgent disdain, sat Gaston La Chaise, the
sculptor, whose sober carriage and handsome,
dark, clear-cut head made so interesting a contrast
to the appearance and demeanour of his proud
peacock wife, a woman capable of advancing down
Eighth Street with the inspiring gait of an empress.
Not far off sat Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, concentrated,
alert, self-conscious, his curious wide-aware features
surmounted by well curry-combed schoolboy hair. I was speaking to him just before the
party broke up, and we left the house together.

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As we turned the corner into Sixth Avenue he mentioned Amy Lowell's poetry. "It is all right, but she is not really important," he said ; and as we made our way across the street under the elevated railway, I recollect feeling an immediate response to his words, a response of enthusiasm that there still remained certain custodians of literature who refuse to be gulled, though it is by a Boston magnate of poesy in her pleasure dome of sacrosanct violet-coloured glass. But let the soul of Amy Lowell rest in peace ; in spite of all her failings, in spite of her solid silver candelabra, and her extraordinary publicity-sense, she was an imposing and gallant figure, and a great character of our time.

As I passed under the library of the Anglican Seminary that night, I remember coming upon one of those street incidents which are to me always so agitating. A man, apparently dead-drunk, was lying on the curb, with an enormous policeman standing over him. In order to rouse him to consciousness I saw the officer deliberately strike him over the head two or three times with a rough piece of board which he had taken from a near-by garbage-tin. At each stroke the small crowd which had collected laughed that uneasy sycophantic laugh which foreigners in America are inclined to give when they come up against some crude example of Irish or Anglo-Saxon brutality. I was far too nervous to interfere and hurried on. When I did look round I saw that the drunkard had been revived and was leaning against a lamp-post, with blood streaming from his forehead. Such New York street adventures were always peculiarly painful to my nerves. On one occasion I saw a woman being taken to Jefferson Market prison. Two

constables were carrying her, and the one behind, *Herring-Gulls*
who held her by the wrists, seemed to take deliberate satisfaction in allowing her grey hair to drag along the pavement. Indeed, as he looked round at the crowd, I caught an expression on his face of a kind of pride, the pride of an actor who is playing his part well and is providing the audience with the thrill they demand ; and the audience, the human beings, who witnessed with me this particular act, what a curious, fatuous interest was displayed on their faces, the very same fatuous interest I had once noted on the countenances of a group of people whom I came upon watching the runnings to and fro of a mouse which, loose in the street and with its small grey body covered with mud, was wildly and hopelessly trying to find some place of refuge from a publicity its instinct told it was fatal to its safety. It must be acknowledged that it is extremely hard to think of the human race as noble. One can only say that under certain circumstances certain individuals have upon occasion acted with nobility ; for the rest, without being actively malicious, we are only too prone to regard the harsh sequence of cause and effect, the dragging prongs of the iron harrow with which the Devil harrows us, with a kind of base curiosity, the base curiosity of a set of booby-heads lolling over a fence to witness the roasting alive of a black cat.

But how lovely, after so many confused impressions, to be able to dissociate oneself entirely from one's fellow witlings, to be cognisant only of one's own arrant identity, dozing like a carrier pigeon on a sooty roof-top, asleep in a Universe whose unravished calm remains, and always will remain, unaffected by the too-clever inventions of Mr.

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of Bridlegoose* Thomas A. Edison and his bright compatriots. Consider the effect upon one's spirits of a Socony Station stained with oil, of the concentrated banality of radio-broadcasting, of automobiles and of the cement boulevards they traverse, and let us be grateful that though our kind can outrage the virginal surface of the earth, yea ! and the pure atmosphere around it, with every kind of abomination, it is still incapable of tampering, even in the least degree, with the august progression of the moon ; still less with the punctual bands of Orion !

POETRY AND PREJUDICE

It was the first autumn I had spent in America ; and as week followed week, and month followed month, with town and country bathed in a still spacious air, more tranquil, more pellucid, than I had known in Africa or Europe, I felt my appreciation of the New World rise ever higher. I knew the fogs and damp of an English autumn—who better ? But now I realised I had come to a country where a large, gracious atmosphere transvalued all values. And this impression remained with me to the end. For, in spite of its aptitude for standardisation, its newspaper public opinion, in spite of all that is intolerable in this country of material revelations and mock idealism, it remains a land essentially disenthralled, where half the shackles cloying free movement have been broken, and where a certain casual nonchalant good-humour, tough as the rind of pumpkins, does reciprocate the spaciousness of the air. Weeks passed, and still the trees on the Palisades retained their autumn colouring under what to an Englishman seemed a cloudless mid-summer sky.

One afternoon, during that winter, I attended a lecture that my brother gave at a certain women's club. Before he spoke, the two hundred and fifty members who made up his audience all stood up and began to recite, like a set of Sunday-school children, a patriotic hymn, and at a given moment thrust out long arms in the direction of the American flag. I was, I must confess it, a trifle taken aback. Here was a gathering of women who were probably the

leaders of society in this particular neighbourhood, and yet they apparently felt no misgiving at taking part in so provincial a display. When I considered the intellectual aridity, the lack of taste, capable of producing such a ceremony upon such an occasion, I could only gasp. Yet the set expression on those female faces, as they pointed at the Stars and Stripes, just as savages might point at the totem of their tribe, has remained always in my memory, to remind me, when I grow unduly optimistic, of the unenlightenment which lies like a miasmic mist in the way of any charming and tolerant civilisation. After the performance was over, and we had escaped, we walked through a succession of streets, trying to find some opening that would give us a view over the wide New Jersey marshes. We could find no break, and as we walked past each compact birdcage of a house, I made reference to the depressing spectacle we had just witnessed. "Oh, you need not worry about that," said my brother. "Those places are mere backwaters, dreary retreats for pathetic women. Another fifty years will see the end of clubs of that kind, its members will have been replaced by the young people, gay, healthy, and unscrupulous, whose laughter we hear in these streets."

It was now that there fell into my hands, for the first time, the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay. There was something about these lyrics, these snatches of song, contained in the slim black volume called *Renaissance*, that amazed and enchanted me. They seemed to express a spirit at once daring and sensitive, and to possess a beauty which, however slight, was separate and authentic as only true poetry can be.

Late that autumn I managed to procure an introduction to her. She lived in a house on Twelfth Street which has since been demolished, but which was then owned by a certain Mrs. Helmar, a competent, good-natured, little Irishwoman, who could be extraordinarily indulgent to the lodgers she liked, and extraordinarily mean to those she disliked. I mounted the steps and rang the bell three times, as I had been directed to do. Presently I found myself in the presence of the girl I so much honoured. Her appearance in no way disappointed me. She was dainty with a daintiness that can only be compared with the daintiness of Queen Anne's lace or with the daintiness of a spider-web gossamer such as I have seen decorating the leaves of dahlia flowers on a September morning. It is true that I did detect in her look an April shadow of vanity, but below this self-conscious protection was a living representation of the divine spirit of poetry, uncontaminated as the spirit of Catullus, gay as the spirit of John Suckling. I never became disillusioned ; the more I saw of this young and most beautiful girl, the more I came to appreciate the rash quality of her nature, heedless and lovely as a fieldfare rising from the wintry ground. She might disguise herself in all the pretty frippery that she could buy at Wanamaker's, she might be photographed for *Vanity Fair* every day of the week, and yet below her laces and ribbons there will always remain a barefoot poet, doomed yet redeemed, under the shadow of Eternity.

Of course, it cannot be gainsaid that *Vanity Fair* has been responsible for influencing, not always for the better, the literary styles of many gifted writers. The paper prides itself on publishing the work of

the most distinguished men and women of our time ; and because of the high rates that it pays it becomes a temptation, apparently even to people of sound talent, to adapt themselves to the smart tone that this fashionable journal especially favours. In my lean days I myself have been eager enough to be given an opportunity to succumb to such a temptation ; but because of the difficulty of converting a piece of ground-ivy into a hothouse plant, my name has only once appeared in the paper, and this on the occasion when Mr. Crowninshield magnanimously published a purely propagandist piece of writing against motion picture films of wild life in Kenya Colony which had struck me as more than usually stupid and brutal. I was entertained, when I called at the office, by Mr. Edmund Wilson, the scholarly and sagacious critic whose work we have all come to admire so much. On seeing him I wondered how he could ever have permitted himself and his friend, Mr. John Peale Bishop, to select for a volume of poems, some of which were written in a mood of serious philosophic pessimism, so ill-chosen a title as *An Undertaker's Garland*, being altogether oblivious, apparently, of the deep offence inherent in such facetiousness. One longs for the formidable voice of some great ancient divine—some Dr. John Donne or some Jeremy Taylor—to thunder out at these young elegants. You can write of life with bitterness, nay, with intemperate ferocity, and all is well, but surely triviality should be reserved for the trivial. The secret of existence is deep, and again deep, and it is never pleasant to hear superficial society voices in moments of vision or emotional stress. Consider the desperate nature of the terms upon which we

live, consider life's savagery and beauty, the infinite variety of the Creator's harvested imagination, *Poetry and Prejudice* the lark bounding higher and higher into the sky, the dainty horned snail carrying with deliberate purpose its convoluted shell through grass-stems ; consider the deadly brevity of our days, with evil connecting us together like a terrible live-wire, and then contemplate death, that final, abominable subterfuge, which at a single blow reduces everything to nothing. Contemplate the look on a young girl's face who supports on her knees the head of her dead lover, and then surely it will be revealed how these young men of fashion blundered from an æsthetic point of view.

Before Mr. Wilson appeared, I sat for some minutes in the waiting-room, watching, perhaps not altogether honestly, a succession of young girls pass by the door. The offices of *Vanity Fair* certainly possessed a tone, an atmosphere, peculiar to themselves. As one glanced at the clever, snappy faces passing backwards and forwards along the carpeted corridors, faces that looked so admirably adapted to modern life, one could not help being reminded of Miss Nancy Boyd's prose style. (Ah, what a fall is there !) Indeed, these smart maidens, with their weasel waists and high-heeled morocco slippers, appeared to be perfect products of the magazine whose interests they served. After I had talked a few minutes with Mr. Wilson, a point arose over which it seemed judicious to consult Mr. Crowninshield, and I was admitted into the presence of the great man. Mr. Crowninshield was wearing a modish coat of a superb cut, and had the air of a competent and polite man of the world who had somehow or other managed to combine the efficient

look of an alert business magnate with the superb nonchalance of the manager of some exclusive seaside hotel—in short, a kind of Beau Nash of Park Avenue !

That year on Christmas Eve there was a heavy fall of snow. It came fluttering down from far up in the heavens, upon the pavements, upon the policemen directing the traffic, and upon the innumerable parcels that were distributed by the expressmen. I sat over a log-fire reading an ancient legend which told how a village idiot who was serving a priest on Christmas morning suddenly fell dead at the window “ where the saints stand in a row. For the face he had seen pressed against the coloured glass had ensnared his life as the fowler ensnares the supple neck of a bird with an invisible silken thread.”

Late in the evening I went to a party in the rooms of Mr. Conroy, the actor. Clare Eames was there, with her proud head held high amid wreathed fumes of tobacco and wine, and Mr. Sidney Howard also, tough, well-constituted, and not easy to shift. On the floor near the sofa gracefully reclined Mr. Rollo Peters, whose airy manner and light aristocratic touch roused in my over-grave countryman’s soul an obscure jealousy. The gathering was a gay one, the punch was strong, the cherries well sugared, but for some reason I felt sullen and out of it. I left with Edna St. Vincent Millay, conducting her across Fifth Avenue. In a near-by churchyard stood a spick-and-span Christmas tree, with electric bulbs for candles. I looked askance at it, and yet, though the lights were electric lights, it did help to suggest the spirit of the season as I had known it at home in Dorset, where at that very hour the

lights from the cottage windows of East Chaldon *Poetry and*
were, I knew, shining out into the darkness, visible *Prejudice*
as far away as the steep downland sheep-track which
leads you past where the broken harrow stands.

GOING WEST

ONE evening as I was returning from a party at Professor Crane's I became aware of a curious tingling sensation which soon developed into a severe attack of the grippé, and for several days I lay in bed with a high fever. Mrs. Hunt, with an untiring benevolence characteristic of her, came across each day from her home in the Seminary opposite, bringing me savoury dishes. It was through her that I afterwards met Winston Churchill, that good man who only quite recently has come to understand that the pavements of New York City and the grassy plots of Turtle Bay are not as solid as he had at first supposed. I could see Mrs. Hunt's square stone house from my window, and by placing a milk bottle in a certain position on my sill was able to signal to her when in any kind of distress. I could see other things from my window also, for on the opposite side of the Seminary lawns stood several boarding houses patronised by stenographers ; and nothing would give me more pleasure during the evenings of my convalescence than to watch these pretty young ladies throw off their frocks when they came in from work. I was indeed enchanted by the glimpses I got of their slim, white, naked figures moving to and fro in their bedrooms, with the provoking unconsciousness of half a dozen rare birds, whose characteristic plumage, as they flit from twig to twig, one cannot observe quite as clearly as one would like to do.

It was now decided that for my health's sake I

should visit California with my brother. I was to *Going West* meet him in Chicago. I stopped over at Niagara Falls. It was here that I saw my first American robin, strutting about over a patch of fresh green grass on Goat Island. I recollect admiring its proud, light gait, that particular springtime gait which Alfeo Faggi, the sculptor, told me inspired him to model his Eve, one of the most beautiful of his statues.

I arrived in Chicago the next morning, to find my brother in bed at the Stratford Hotel. I sat by the window while he dressed. It was a wet morning and the air was so full of mist that I could not see the lake. Up from underground came a never-ending stream of people. "Clerks," my brother said, "coming in for their day's work." "Why don't they run away?" I asked. For even though I knew the pressure of necessity as well as another it seemed incredible to me that anybody in his senses could submit to so sordid a subjugation.

By the afternoon we had reached Fort Madison. I liked the look of this place. But what a river! I could see the dirty-yellow silt in its water as I peered down at it through the planks of the bridge over which our train rattled; and the dead, drowned trees on its banks, surely they had never budded or borne leaves? The next morning I waked at dawn. As soon as I had drawn up the green curtain, I found myself looking out on a dismal landscape. Along the distant horizon I saw continual flashes of lightning, zigzagging down to earth. In one homestead, dimly visible over a wide stretch of land, a light was shining; and as I was carried forward, I experienced a very definite sense of loss, in that I could never hope to have

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knowledge of the savour of the lives of the people who inhabited the well-used rooms of that isolated abode. A day or two later the train began to cross the deserts of Arizona, flushed dog-rose, olive-green deserts, fading away to distant mountains. What kind of a god held sway in such a land? Some gilded-toed finicking Peruvian deity playing all day long with his own mincing shadow; though it appeared to be a most primitive country composed, perhaps, of chemical atoms less loaded with gravitation than other segments of the earth. One could imagine William Blake walking here naked, holding high converse with Los. The soil itself, light and painted, seemed to partake of the nature of the elements, as though by a belated creation it had been spared the blood-stained history of the Old World. We might, I thought, have been passing over the surface of Uranus or some other remoter planet, where there had been no fall, and consequently no need of salvation. Now and again we saw a flock of sheep, or some cattle, or a single horseman, and then again more plains, and more mountains, tawny and spotted as though huge cheetah-skins had been thrown across them. Some of the plains must have measured fifty or sixty miles from end to end, vast playing-fields, where heroes and immortals might disport themselves with no fear but that there would be room for their castes. We crossed the Colorado River in the evening. Its banks were covered with masses of green foliage; and, looking behind us, we saw the bare, jagged Needle Rocks, forming a background suitable to some fantastic El Greco picture. The next morning, when we awoke, we were really in California. On each side of the track were green

fields, grown with corn, already in full ear. Flowers *Going West* were everywhere. Here was a cultivated land where the rougher usages of the stock-farmer had given place to gentler occupations, to the pruning of orchards, to the tending of vineyards, to the growing of corn. The railway track itself was overgrown with weeds and grasses, pushing their way up between the "sleepers." From above, the sun kept pouring down upon us, as we sat in the observation car, the air heavy with the smell of the secret fertility of the earth. By noon that day we were crossing the ferry to San Francisco ; and standing on the deck, in the bright sunshine, I looked out through the Golden Gate, for the first time, at the Pacific.

We took rooms in a hotel at Sausalito, pleasant rooms that overlooked a garden. My brother, however, had no great liking for the place. The servants of the hotel were Filipinos ; and as day followed day, he developed a definite antipathy for these little dark-eyed men in white clothes, who looked as if their "bones were filled with air," and who would torment him in a thousand ways—by jangling on guitars, by gambling clink, clink, clink, outside our window, and by putting before him each meal-time a platter full of half-cooked carrots. I think they resented his being a vegetarian, and indeed found his personality peculiarly exasperating, the personality of this extraordinary man who had the appearance of one of their own heathen idols. For several days my brother would appear to be happy, and then once more the shrill, inhuman cries of these dapperlings would get on his nerves, and he would begin pacing up and down like a secretive, lean badger which finds itself

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of Bridlegoose* trapped on a concrete floor with no chance of burrowing.

But we had certain golden moments. After our breakfast of pale cereal, served with thin milk, it became a habit with us to walk upon a high, terraced road flecked with the flickering shadows of eucalyptus trees. We were happy together.

We used to see a great deal of Sarah Bard Field and Colonel Wood, the former spirited and generous, and able to wear, prettily enough, flowers in her grey hair, the latter like some magnificent old chieftain, victor of a hundred battles. The knob of the electric bell on their front door had been sadly worn by the fingers of a procession of indigent poets and hungry radicals, but never was their bounty exhausted. Truly it was a noble thing to see the old man busy himself with the simples that he was preparing for a salad, or to follow behind him as he walked up Chinatown, white-haired, debonair, and bowed down with parcels. His ways are not my ways, his beliefs are not my beliefs; but I cannot but do homage to this old, unrelenting, white-maned lion of Oregon.

SAN FRANCISCO

ONE day my brother and I walked to the sea. It was not a happy excursion. The beach appeared drab and littered. Whether it had ever possessed salt-washed, gleaming pebbles and yellow corrugated sands, I cannot say. That morning we found its margin made up of cinders and tattered pieces of paper and, what was worse still, cast-off automobile tires. Few objects in the world are capable of affecting my mind more unpleasantly than these derelict rings of india-rubber. One can imagine some limbo of cast-away objects in which old arrow heads, old spade handles, old sea wreckage, and the broken limbs of old dolls, would draw away in eternal disgust from these repulsive appendages of highways that are no highways.

We returned to our habitation among the Filipinos completely discouraged. The walk had evidently been too much for me, for the next morning I woke with an attack of blood-spitting. As always, this indication that I had again been overtaken by my vigilant enemy filled me with gloomy foreboding. That day it happened that my brother met George Sterling in the streets of San Francisco. This admirable Poet Laureate of the West, for whom we both felt so great a regard, on hearing of my predicament, did all in his power to persuade me to undergo treatment at Dr. Abrams' clinic.

Well do I remember walking up Sacramento Street toward the house of this Faustus of the twentieth century, with George Sterling at my side,

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of Bridlegoose* his delicately moulded head marking him out as a poet, as the skylark is known by its tufted crest. In truth, I felt as I turned to look at his profile as though I were passing over the cobbled streets, not of San Francisco, but of Florence, and had at my side none other than Dante himself, but a Dante with two lusty horns protruding from his forehead like those to be seen in the head of Michael Angelo's Moses. For there was always something sportive and pagan about George Sterling; and when he told me it was a common pastime of his to dive for water-lilies in the ponds of Golden Gate Park, I felt in no way surprised. It seemed an occupation singularly appropriate to him, far more appropriate, indeed, than that he should select to stay at the Bohemian Club, that ostentatious resort of the rich business men of the city, who, each year, with a hundred and one flunkeys, betake themselves to the redwood forests for their "high jinks," a festival that any authentic poet, philosopher, or man of letters would shy away from as though it were an assembly of devils.

Dr. Abrams fascinated me. To this day I am confident that the man had a kind of mad genius. He was just one more of these bearded Jews, whose burning eyes scorch great holes in the manifold curtains that blind and stifle the human race. One felt that he was a Jacob who, while he wrestled with the angel from sunset to sunrise, kept glancing every half-hour at the oil-stove in the mouth of his tent, upon which his pottage was cooking. He had a nervous, penetrating glance. Sterling told me that he never allowed any one to walk behind him. He certainly never rested; and I used to like to think of him, all night long, unveiling, under the shadow

of the majestic Californian night-sky, a hundred *San Francisco* subtle secrets. I like quacks. I feel sympathetic toward them and believe in them. On my soul, I'd as soon see an honest Nic Culpeper at my bedside as half a dozen doctors with their heads stuffed full of academic ewe's wool !

Abrams took a drop of blood from my left ear, meanwhile making me stand in just such a position so that, as I looked at the pretty figure of the uniformed nurse who held the cotton-wool, my body would come into some cunning harmony with the spinning movement of the earth as it turned and turned like a green pea in a crystal ball. And after he had found that I suffered from tuberculosis, and by means of some dangling plummet of his own contrivance had diagnosed (and he did this correctly) just exactly where my sickness was still active, he set me down in front of his electrical machine, and having already painted my right shoulder-blade with some brilliant marsh-marigold yellow, which after a few days formed a kind of shellac, he tied under it a round-shaped battery, causing my flesh to tingle as if the fin of a seal had been placed against it. I received ten treatments. Every day I sat opposite the magic box with a new patient ; and on these occasions, when we were left alone in the room, I was able to question each one as to the success of the new remedy. They were enthusiastic believers in the treatment. They had known the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the halt to walk ! At the end of ten days, I underwent a new blood-test and was pronounced cured. For two years I had no further trouble with my consumption. Dr. Abrams refused to take any money from me.

And now that the miracle had happened, and I

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was once again well, I took counsel with myself how I might best employ my time. I made many friends, but the one I loved best was Nan. She was an extraordinarily sweet-natured girl and suffered from no inhibitions whatever. To this day the memory of her gay laughter fills me with joy. A few hours of her company had the effect of ridding my own mind of I know not how many mean moralities. For after all, if you find a resting-place in some golden, ungarnered corn-field, with clinging bindweed and drugging red poppies and honey-bees all about you, it is hard to remain an artful, calculating, and ignoble renegade to your more spontaneous nature. How charming were the hours we spent together! One night we loitered long after the sun had gone down, in Golden Gate Park, sporting under the great trees, entranced by the beauty of the moonlight. "For shame! I believe we are in the buffalo-pen," she cried out once, in alarm; but I held her close and stroked her hand, which was as white as the hand of Izaak Walton's milkmaid. And looking up through the spreading branches at the stars, at the thousand and one cat's eyes, cold and crafty, I could not but marvel at the utter folly—nay, wickedness—of those men who do all that is in their power to hinder and hamper boys and girls from the free enjoyment of what alone perhaps constitutes a sufficient justification for the long, unrecorded travail of existence. For let us clear the air of cant and it will be acceded that the hours which on our death-beds we would most care to remember are those fair and happy hours when a fortunate opportunity had been given us to scramble into some honeysuckle thicket with "Moll, Mag,

Marian, or Margery." There would seem to be a *San Francisco* conspiracy amongst us Anglo-Saxons to disparage, as far as is possible, the delights of love-making. That section of society whose chief concern is to perpetuate the stability of their ill-gotten property, take it upon themselves to harness and bridle what is as unstable as quicksilver, as evasive as the light of moonshine. They even endeavour to pervert the natures of their daughters, for the purpose of selling their chastity in the matrimonial market—as though it were contained in an unopened golden casket—to the highest bidder. And what claptrap issues out of their mouths! All this chat about the evil of sensuality, what is it? Who in God's name has ever known an honest sensualist who has half the evil in his nature that is to be found in these miserable, suppressed, narrow-lipped "home-guards," who sit perched up at the heads of their family tables, between the salt and the pepper, devising sly plans for their own vulgar advancement out of desires that should be left free as the mackerel that in the month of June flick in and out of the sea in Weymouth Bay?

When we reached the Sausalito ferry, it was nearly two o'clock in the morning ; and after I had said good-bye to my friend I found that the last boat had gone. I forthwith retraced my steps up Market Street and took rooms in the Lincoln Hotel. It was late when I waked the next morning. However tired I may be, nothing gives me more annoyance than to find that I have dreamed away the best part of a day. I am one who prefers to be up with the sun. Like another Merry Andrew, do not I hear night and day "Time's Wingèd Chariot!" Well I comprehend the long occasion I shall have for

unconsciousness, when mouth, nostrils, and ear-holes are bunged with potter's clay. For this reason I was in an ill-humour when, after having paid my reckoning, I stepped out into Market Street, which had assumed already the everyday commonplace look a town wears at noon when the last vestige of glamour belonging to the deserted hours of the early morning has worn off, and the first indications of the relaxation accompanying the fall of night are as yet unobserved. I had a mind to breakfast, and breakfast well, but then I felt unshaven, and eventually decided that the best thing I could do, in my present mood of discontent, would be to visit a barber. I entered a small shop and took my place on a chair opposite an enormous mirror. After the man had finished, and was removing the moist, hot towels with which my face had been swathed, I suggested he should give my hair a good brushing. No sooner, however, did he touch my head, than the rogue cried out like a yaffle in spring-time, vehemently asseverating that my scalp was full of he knew not what filth. At first I was completely taken aback ; but then, remembering how lately I had been frisking in the glades of the Park, I uttered, with no little complacence, by way of explanation, the comfortable words "fir cones." "Fir cones be——" answered my persecutor. "I'll show you some fir cones." And with that he went to a drawer and got a comb, and running it through my hair held it up before my eyes, full of the most vile-looking vermin. I was now at my wit's end, and would scarce have known what to do, if the fellow had not offered me a bottle of some preparation which, so he assured me, would kill "the sons of bastards in no time at all."

The bottle cost five dollars, but I paid the money *San Francisco* gladly.

Once back in Sausalito, I gave my head the severest shampoo it had ever had, dousing it the while with the precious concoction. Just as I was completing my toilet my brother John came in. I told him of my trouble. "You should have taken no notice," he said. "When American hair-dressers tell me there is something wrong with my hair, I simply say, 'I know, I know, I know.'" Like a flash I understood how I had been gulled, understood how this slick skeezicks had by him some hidden supply of hair-lice, which he could draw upon at will, terrifying his more foolish customers into buying his damned bottles of coloured turtle-tincture. And this suspicion was confirmed the next day, when I visited a hair specialist, who entirely reassured me as to the condition of my crown. I confided my adventure to my sweet Nan, as she sat opposite me at a restaurant table, eating a watermelon; and how gaily she laughed, and how prettily, how mischievously, her shameless blue eyes danced! She did not care.

GOOD FRIENDS

THE Filipino servants at the hotel continued to exasperate my brother to such an extent that we were driven to look for quarters elsewhere. Eventually we found what we wanted, and established ourselves in an old-fashioned hostel overlooking the Bay. Our new room was large and possessed seven windows, and because it was light and airy I would often wake at dawn ; and on these occasions, in order to pass away the time, I would sometimes take up the newspaper of the day before. One morning, when I was opening this favourite journal of mine, opening it with the particular crackling sound that newspapers make when their great flapping pages are being refolded, my brother John, whom I had imagined fast asleep, suddenly sat bolt up in bed. "Good Lord !" he exclaimed. "How the life-energy must come pouring back into you ! Think of being able to read a Hearst paper as soon as ever one opens one's eyes ! Imagine it ! Why, for most of us it takes hours upon hours before we can even contemplate the state of consciousness with any agreeable feeling. I am one," he went on, " who believes that arrangements should be made for civilised people to spend the day up to five o'clock with the vegetable world alone, and yet, and yet," he continued ruefully, "it is my destiny to sleep in the same room with some one capable of reading the *Examiner* at six o'clock in the morning." As soon as he had finished speaking he put out a long, lean arm (being by now thoroughly awakened) for a box of Richmond

cigarettes, giving me meanwhile a look full of *Good Friends* love and ironic amusement. But how happy I was with him, have always been with him, with this old Salamander, who is so supersensitive to the dim consciousness of Nature that on more than one occasion I have quarrelled with him because I could not persuade him to sit in a wayside hedge for fear of crushing the waving grasses which grew there. I know him, who better? I know how caught in an evil trap he has been, and how he has been exploited and "nothing said." How he has been compelled by force of circumstances and his own magnanimity to prostitute his talents and to perform like a dancing-bear before gatherings made up of people who understand him not at all. Often and often, with tears in my eyes, have I watched him set out to give a lecture to a girls' school, to a women's club, he who by the magic of his tongue could have made the very ancients exclaim. Lydia Gibson, whom I met for the first time at Sarah Bard Field's house, used to declare that I suffered from a "brother complex." Little indeed did she understand! Have not I for a quarter of a century followed in the wake of John Cowper? All that I am I owe to him. Like a sagacious Sancho Panza, I have ever kept close behind his great medieval wain full of the foison of I know not what rich harvest-field. And whatever out of its largess his ample wagon gave to the wayside hedge, that have I had the wit to garner and, with the panniers of my Dapple well stuffed, to carry shrewdly off to the nearest market. For let them say what they will, it is John alone of all of us who can be likened to the forked lightning, he alone has undisputed access to those deep, cool

wells where the gods themselves let down their buckets.

Of those who have been cognisant of the hidden drama of my brother's life, none has watched it with more sympathy and understanding than has Theodore Dreiser. Many a time have I heard him declare that nothing would please him better than to provide a refuge, a cell, for his friend. The very first time I saw Dreiser, he touched upon this subject. It was at Sausalito ; and when he had finished speaking, I remember he turned a heavy, quizzical glance on me, as much as to say, " Well, how is it that you have not a well-balanced pack-saddle on your back, and are not harnessed up with a good stout, bread-winner's breeching ? " We were sitting on the verandah of the hotel together, and I read him an essay I had written, entitled *Black Gods*. It did me good to see how the old bully-rook chuckled, as he sat there, rocking himself backwards and forwards, and doing up his handkerchief into a thousand little squares. We saw him off at the Sausalito station ; and as we turned the corner, near the patch of grass where I once sat eating a bagful of cherries, I looked round, thereby accidentally impressing upon my mind the visual memory of this ponderous man, with his hands clasped behind his back, striding along the platform, deep in thought. For Theodore Dreiser is one of those who are utterly incapable of swallowing the world as a young cuckoo swallows the grub that its wagtail mother has brought to it. He must look under every leaf, turn over every stone. His great lumbering imagination, full of a divine curiosity, goes roaring through the prairie-lands of the Cosmos with the restless heavy-shouldered

force of an old bull *wildebeest*. Whenever I am *Good Friends* with him and can watch his cumbersome intellect at work upon any one of the manifold subjects that occupy his attention, subjects like "the trickiness of women," the breeding of pigeons, the reasoning-power of a spider he studied once in his bed-chamber, or the electronic basis of the Universe, I never fail to be amazed, never fail to feel awe at the struggles of this ungainly giant, whose limbs are still half buried in clay. It was Theodore Dreiser who was with my brother when he had his operation. He put on a white coat and accompanied him into the theatre, talking philosophically with him up to the last moment.

I received the news of Dr. John Erdmann's victory over Death a few days later, in the heart of Africa, as I was crossing a wide sun-scorched plain on my white pony. Indeed, if I visited Kenya again I could without difficulty find my way to the exact spot where the naked negro messenger met me, somewhere between the stunted *lilishwa* tree and where the baboons used to sit on the escarpment ledges, a little this side of the first water-hole.

It was Theodore Dreiser who wrote a preface for *Ebony and Ivory*. A curious incident happened in connection with this. My publisher told me that it was customary to recompense writers who undertook to sponsor a book, to the tune of fifty dollars. I was astonished by this information ; but as I had recently given a lecture at Miss Spence's School, where I had received a cheque for this very amount, I went to Dreiser and nervously offered him the hard-earned piece of paper. He at once concluded that I was handing him a cheque written out by

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myself, and seizing it between his enormous finger and thumb, tore it into a hundred fragments. At that moment I entertained two conflicting emotions. I felt proud at having come across a man of letters who so vindicated the high traditions of the profession, but at the same time I experienced a very real pain in the region of my wrinkled navel to think of Miss Spence's good bounty being destroyed in this way. "The present-day world is no place for us intellectuals," Dreiser would remark. "We are about as much tolerated as a lot of rats who just manage to secure a livelihood by keeping out of sight." It was Theodore Dreiser who had first suggested the publication of *Ebony and Ivory*. He wrote a letter to Mr. Horace Liveright, who after he had looked over the collection of essays, went so far as to suggest that he himself should forthwith set about selling each of them separately to the magazines. Half the proceeds of these fortunate transactions were to go, so he explained, toward the expense of advertising the book. While I stood bewildered by the flattering plan of campaign he had presented to my mind, he laid his hand on my shoulder and graciously told me that I might consider him as my publisher. Six months later, after an interview with a sinuous, self-possessed clerk, who made me feel as I sat opposite him as though I were searching for firm ground on the Goodwin Sands, I received my manuscript back, and with it came to me, for the first time, a full appreciation of the meaning of that "colourful" and expressive American phrase, "a hot-air artist." I received very different treatment at the hands of Otto Liveright, the literary agent, who, on one occasion, because he knew I was

poor, acted for me and refused to receive a penny *Good Friends* for his trouble. While in America, I continually found myself being accorded the most surprising and undeserved generosity. Instead of wishing me to fail, as my brother Theodore has often taught me to expect, many Americans apparently wished me to succeed, and would go out of their way, even when they were strangers, to help me.

John at this time was giving a course of lectures at Burlingame where the more fashionable Californians live. I used to accompany him each week to some great house. There were families who were obviously distinguished, and others who were not. We visited the richest of all the houses one afternoon ; yet in spite of the display of so much wealth and so many really beautiful treasures, one only wanted to run away. We were entertained afterwards by our hostess, a pretentious woman, who had the waddling walk of a swan-goose I once saw on the estate of my friend, Rivers Pollock, in the county of Suffolk. Just as one comes upon people in America who appear better-bred than any Europeans, so one occasionally meets men and women who apparently consider ordinary refinement as quite unnecessary, so confident are they that their prestige depends entirely upon their wealth. In New York, I have gone up a marble staircase behind a liveried servant, to find myself ushered into the presence of I know not what company. My brother and I left this particular Californian mansion in amazement at all that we had heard and seen, and were unable to rid our minds of our impression for several hours. The cool green vistas of the colonnade of trees in front of the station could not do it for us, any more than could

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the look of the stockyards on the outskirts of San Francisco, those stockyards which almost invariably arrested our attention as the train slid past them ; with the animals crowded into narrow pens, without food, waiting to be slaughtered for the nourishment of the inhabitants of the brothels of the suppressed Barbary Coast, as well as for the pretty bodies of the incomparably caparisoned ladies whose thoughts had been so lately directed toward the delicate and difficult art of life as understood by Walter Pater and Gabriele d'Annunzio.

It was nearly midnight before we returned to our hotel, advancing step by step along the overgrown paths of the perfumed, moth-haunted summer-garden. The moon was at its full, and my brother insisted upon sitting down at the foot of a great shadowed tree to contemplate the dead planet that has always had so strange an influence over him. And as the light of it, that enchanted white light, flooded down upon us, touching the upper side of every leaf, we felt, as we rested there in that darkened place, something of its divine power. Its radiance was falling, we knew, everywhere, falling upon the jasmine flowers we had seen trailing over the sill of the Burlingame house, falling upon the blunt snouts of the frogs inhaling dew-cool air in pools on the downs, falling on the flat, broad horns of motionless moose, standing in hidden valleys far away in the Rocky Mountains. But as we watched, conscious of the wavering, tremulous mystery of the night as the very insects about us, deep-buried in the long, damp grass, an unwonted thing happened. Suddenly upon the left side of that great luminous disk there appeared a black speck, insignificant as one tiny eyelash on the cheek

of a girl. It enlarged its proportions, invading that *Good Friends* silvery surface with a clear hard projection of inky blackness which grew moment by moment greater and greater. Who could describe the ghostly accumulating darkness that fell upon the Sausalito hillside? It was as different from ordinary darkness as the face of a corpse is different from the face of a man asleep. Aha! The equivocal cuck-quean! It was the other side of darkness—darkness showing its backside to us, as God showed his to Moses. By accident we had selected the hour of a total eclipse of the moon for our vigil, for watching and praying in that western garden.

Treachery in the heavens! From land
And sea and every forest way,
From frightened pastures and darkened sand
Rose up a cry of wild dismay—

We felt our direction through the dim blackness to the door of the Hollyoak Hotel, and went up into our turreted chamber in silence.

CALIFORNIAN CHARACTERS

It would be hard to deny the beauty of the scenery about San Francisco, or the classical appearance of the city itself, as it rises above its silver bay, tier upon tier. I shall never forget my astonishment when I first arrived in Sausalito and found myself so early in the year standing knee-deep in grasses and flowers at the door of the hotel; and for weeks the floral spring-time profusion of the downs never failed to startle me, as I came upon it on each folded hillside. At first I liked to see the ubiquitous evergreen oaks matted closely together at the bottom of every combe, and took especial delight in walking beneath the tall, rustling eucalyptus trees, bordering the upland tracks with their hygienic pointed foliage and pink, flaky trunks; but when I learnt that this particular tree was not indigenous to the country, but had been imported from Australia, and that the oak tree of the poet Horace never shed its leaves, I developed an odd antipathy for these purged Western prospects, and, indeed, as the summer drew to a close, became more and more conscious of an insistent nostalgia for the East, for a landscape which each year suffered the privations of a real winter, with forest trees standing naked, their roots covered up in snow. But in spring-time, the clear-eyed cheerfulness of California, cheerful with the conventional cheerfulness of those little flowers which the residents in this novel state feel no shame in calling "tidy-tips" and "blue-eyed-babies," has, it cannot be gainsaid, a very definite appeal. It is true that a

visitor from the Old World is constantly made uneasy by the feeling that the Americans who populate each modern, up-to-date Californian town are entirely divorced from a countryside suited, perhaps, to Spanish mountain monasteries or Indian wigwams, but certainly in no way adapted to support an invasion of restless, money-making Anglo-Saxons. Yet I lie; for do not I remember, at this very moment, how the ferry-boats each week-end would carry across the bay thousands of boys and girls, "hikers" (if we are compelled to make use of that hideous word, which, be it noted, we owe to the Filipinos) possessed by an exultation that was purely pagan?

A brave sight it was to see these laborious boats, these happily burdened triremes, let loose on the Sausalito pier their jocund cargoes of pleasure-seekers. And yet, if you can believe it, even during the time I was in San Francisco, there were certain people whose natures were so poisoned by moralic acid that they could, with a free conscience, get up an agitation against allowing these charming excursionists to sleep out in the woods together. Conceive, if you can, the state of mind, the inert malice, latent in men and women who could deliberately set about trying to deprive these children of the only free and happy hours of their working-week. Fortunately, such detestable malt-weevils have ranged against them forces not easy to be overcome. Each summer the great downs lie at the foot of Mount Tamalpais, like beautiful naked women, and the youth of the city is not slow to take the hint.

However, it would be a mistake, as I have already tried to show, to think that all Californians have the

mental outlook of a congress of Methodist ministers. During our stay, my brother and I had the honour of making the acquaintance of Noel Sullivan, a young man, tall and slim and bearded. If ever I want to conjure up for my own satisfaction a type of a perfect aristocrat, I find that my mind immediately reverts to this "gentleman from San Francisco." One afternoon he drove us to a country-house belonging to some relation of his. I well recollect the figure he cut, as he stood in the centre of a brilliant green lawn, holding delicately on the end of a long first finger a scarlet macaw; also I remember the expression of religious, sophisticated irony that passed over his ultra-refined countenance, as, stepping out of his motor car, he crossed a grassy lawn, his discreetly polished shoes shining in the late afternoon sun, to peer through the newly cement-set bars of the grille of a convent, built and endowed by his family for the lifelong confinement of a score or more young girls, brought here for pictureque imprisonment, as a whim, perhaps, of this young Prince, who, although ashamed of the power his wealth gave him, was yet very well able to appreciate the peculiar beauty belonging to any kind of religious ecstasy in a world where all is, at best, so dubious and so fleeting.

Very different from Mr. Sullivan was the redoubtable Dr. Schott. Here, in truth, was an original; I had almost said a genius. In appearance he suggested some alert barber of Piræus, a barber whose head was full of information about the back-lanes of Athens, information that he would impart piece-meal to his customers while he munched raisins from a leather wallet at his side. The fantastic spiral stairways of Dr. Schott's mind were reflected in his

fantastical physiognomy, reflected in his pale face and prying nose, and in the protruding flaps of black hair that fell away from the perfect parting in the middle of his head. And, by God, this incomparable jumping-jack knew well enough how to peer through the wainscot cracks of reality! I have been with him when he has set the whole universe agog with his metaphysical whimsies and quaint philosophical tags. Nothing was true, nothing was stable, before the sight of Dr. Schott. That the fellow was as mad as a March magpie I have little doubt. But how quaint and sharp a glance I saw him bestow upon the window in the St. Francis Hotel where Fatty Arbuckle had recently been disporting himself, as he discussed the origin of Christianity and pondered "what in the devil's name could have started the story going so crazy, crazy!"

I was to see the Doctor on two further occasions before I left America. Once, when he met my friend Kessler, a hard-headed, grave-digging metaphysician, in my rooms in Patchin Place, and once when he returned from some inconceivable excursion on the Continent, carrying in his hands the two lanterns used by the Paris sacristan in burying Anatole France, whose coffin he had actually seen being tossed in the air by a crew of frisky Gauls, who had undertaken to carry the body of their good, atheistical, catholic master to its grave.

The meeting in Patchin Place was especially amusing to me. Here were juxtaposed two of the most eccentric philosophers that it has ever been my privilege to meet. Often and often had I been depressed by my logger-headed friend Kessler bringing out, by way of an introduction to some

abstruse discourse, that stale, flat, and unprofitable line of argument which begins by asserting that nothing in itself exists ; but when, upon this occasion, the old curmudgeon, sensing that the Doctor was philosophically inclined, began to talk in the same strain, pointing out that the water-jug on the table had an existence only in our minds, you might have thought that the Devil had jumped into the room, by the clamour that arose. "Good God !" yelled the Doctor, raising his crested poll like any farmyard chanticleer in *Æsop's fables* who is reasoning with the town bull, " don't try to put that cock over on me ! "

Kessler in many ways was an interesting man. He arrived suddenly in my rooms in Patchin Place, having drifted across the continent from San Francisco, in order to return a book he had borrowed from my brother. He got work as a gravedigger in a Jewish cemetery. It used to tickle my heart to think of this tough-minded friend of mine " tucking in," day after day, the corpses of New York Jews. I could imagine him so well, standing aside, shovel in hand, this believer in annihilation, while the professional mourners, " soothsayers " he used to call them, played their part. I could so well envisage the expression of silent, snorting scorn that his countenance would manifest as he waited " to get on with his day's work." There was something free and hard about him that one could only admire ; and the eyes that looked out from under his dark forehead were always dog-like and firm. I used to enjoy listening to the stories he told of his adventures : how once, far away in the West, he had slept on a heap of green wheat, and how he had been waked in the morning by

the dainty triangular feet of partridges stepping *Californian Characters*
about over him, and how he had got up and gone to a near-by spring and dipped a crust of dry bread in its cold waters, so that he might partake of the blessed sacrament of a down-and-out, of a tramp and a rover, who felt at that moment more happy than he has ever felt since in his life.

FOUND WANTING

ALTHOUGH San Francisco had many diverting forms of amusement to offer to an easy-going traveller, yet it will always remain a grief to me that the Barbary Coast had already been closed down before I visited the city. Long afterwards, as I sat over a chestnut-wood fire in an old Colonial farmhouse far up in the Catskill Mountains, with the snow like a little ermine mat drifting in under the door, I listened, with absorbed interest, to Walter Franzen's descriptions of what it had been like ; how it had resembled one of those entralling pictures of the Broad Road to Destruction, such as our old cook, the daughter of Charles Childs, the Montacute clerk, used to hang up in her bedroom. Sitting there, over a crackling fire, with our tomcat, Tipoo, perched on the old four-poster bedstead, watching in an attitude of feline craft its own pointed shadow on the wall, I had the scene brought vividly before my eyes—the noisy street lit by a hundred lights, the Salvation Army girls snatching at the sleeves of the young men, imploring them to remember their mothers ; and the long rows of houses, fitted with swinging-doors through which one passed, to select at will any of the inmates who, like painted artificial flowers, lovely to look upon, kept calling out to each newcomer the intimate secrets of their art. Returning late at night from Colonel Wood's house on Russian Hill, I used often to pass through this quarter of the town, but I never saw anything to excite my attention ; indeed, at such times, my chief preoccupation

used to be lest some bandit should spring out at me *Found*
from behind a piled-up heap of "Sunkist" orange *Wanting*
boxes, for it was always my pleasure to pass through
the deserted fruit-market, the smell which rose
from the great store of fruit and vegetables garnered
there being particularly grateful to my nostrils.

Once on the ferry-boat, I would sit looking out at the lights of the terraced city, at the lights on the Island prison, until, with a heavy jolt and a sound of gurgling water, the huge flat-bottomed barge would drift into position between the tall, creaking pier-posts, which, one could see, as the electric light shone upon them, were streaked with the white excrement of sea-gulls. For the bay was crowded with sea-gulls, herring-gulls, like those I used to watch crossing New York City in the early dawn, like those which had been familiar to me from childhood along the white chalk-cliffs of Dorset. I suppose it is more than probable that if some stellar being were to come out of far space to visit the earth, these birds, glancing in the clear morning air, would be among the first sights to reassure such a one that there was life upon this grass-grown sea-glimmering planet.

I used to enjoy looking over the bay at night. I remember, at the end of an evening I spent with Frederick O'Brien, being reminded by a word, a gesture, how inexhaustible was the romance of this harbour, which forms so dramatic a link between West and East. "Sir Francis Drake," so he told me, "had missed it, probably because of a fog, as he sailed up the coast on his famous voyage round the world." And as I stood there on the small balcony of his house, I took a hint from this Irishman, who was so completely natural, so

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of Bridlegoose.* completely devoid of any form of conceit, and yet whose sense of adventure was so vivid that he had been able, by the power of his pen, to stimulate the imaginations of half the reading public of America.

I would sometimes leave the hotel for a day's excursion. I remember I went up to the top of Mount Tamalpais, sitting in an open-air carriage of the small railway, with my eyes, as we slid upwards, intimately observing each patch of scrub on the near bank, while a fellow with an official's braided cap kept bawling through a megaphone opposite commentaries upon the landscape we passed, in the hope, perhaps, of diverting our minds from the very real apprehension (felt by me, at any rate) lest the absurd conveyance in which we were travelling should suddenly start zigzagging backwards and hurl us to perdition amongst the redwood trees in the valley below. For some obscure reason I always harboured a prejudice against redwood trees. Was it, perhaps, that their appeal to the imagination is so obvious a one, an appeal capable of being appreciated altogether too easily by the kind of middle-aged gentlemen who, under a portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson, concentrated their cultured intellects upon profitable speculations in the commercial world? It cannot be denied, however, that actually to touch the bark of a tree whose trunk, beyond all possible dispute, has felt upon its russet crevices the light of the sun which rose over California on the morning after the Crucifixion is an experience most particular. And yet the mere realisation of so unnatural a circumstance necessitates too mean a jump for one's mind, and disposes one to resent such inordinate longevity in the

vegetable world, just as one resents being told by a *Found* circus-master, in evening dress and top-hat, that a certain elephant was born in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In the face of such stubborn anachronisms, expatiated upon at length by a gold-braided guide, one almost finds it in one's heart to wish that the earth would open wide and swallow up such antiquated timber. I understand that Californians do get shaken about once in a while, but I fear it must require more than any ordinary jolt to disturb the profound equanimity of the frequenters of the Bohemian Club! Just as a night spent in a hurricane at the top of a redwood tree failed to inject any real wisdom into the hard Scotch head of John Muir, seeing that it requires much more than half a dozen fir cones in one's beard before one is able to see visions on the road to Damascus.

My brother never cared for such expeditions ; so that, when he was with me, we would content ourselves with walking up the high lanes leading to the downs behind the village, often enough returning in a cold, drifting mist, to take tea in a little shop down by the water, where a round-faced Serb, standing behind a counter, would fill a brown-china teapot, acquired by us with the greatest difficulty, with water boiled in a saucepan. I myself would often bespeak a fresh fish or a half-dozen smelts, for I liked to see them sizzling on the honest fellow's great gridiron, a gridiron designed after the exact pattern of the one he had used as a sea-cook. In truth, this Serb on the waterfront of Sausalito was extraordinarily wise and extraordinarily philosophic ; and when he was handing one a plate of potatoes, done to a turn, with his sleeves rolled up

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and his powerful forearm exposed, one could almost believe that if every one had a little geniality and the capacity for working efficiently at their own jobs, most of the world's problems would be solved. It turned out, however, that even the Serb lacked sufficient sagacity ; for, happening one day to step out into the road in order to obtain a better view of a schooner, he was knocked over by a passing automobile and thrown, like the globose pod of a broad bean, clear across the way, and almost into that very sea out of which came the fish he knew so well how to serve up sprinkled all over with toasted breadcrumbs.

Until this evil chance overtook him I used to feel nothing but shame at watching him deal so deftly with his orders, each pan when out of use being immediately hung up on its dedicated nail. How wonderful, I thought, to be able to make oneself useful at this rate, to be able to take so efficient a part in the world's work ! It appeared that I myself had been born out of due time. If I was not content to be a scurvy schoolmaster, I could imagine no possible niche in the body politic I could fill. As for my writing, it seemed to have come to nothing. No article or essay that I sent East was ever accepted. The mere fact of heading my letter with the word California seemed sufficient to ensure the rejection of the manuscript, the editors concluding out of hand that I was just another weak amateur of letters, such as dwell in their thousands amid the orange-groves of Santa Barbara and Los Angeles. As a life of dependent security seemed still distasteful to me, I determined that as soon as my money was spent I would get back to New York City and starve myself into

success. “*Examiner! Examiner!*” I would hear *Found*
the newspaper-sellers outside the San Francisco *Wanting*
station cry; and their raucous utterance, so
ephemeral and so inconsequent, would go quivering
past the soda-water fountains, go quivering past
the store of the man who sold little purple figs, out
and on and up, to where the station-tower pro-
jected its modern post-earthquake embattlements
into a midnight metallic sky. And as I listened to
their shrill, strangled reiteration of the disturbing
word, and was even accosted by the poor derelict
half-wits who were shouting it out, derelict half-wits
who had been driven into the open like a lot of
frantic whistling mice, I would say to John, “That’s
what I ought to be doing,” and he would for answer
give me a look full of indulgent amusement, making
as though he wished to dig his chin into me, and a
moment later be stooping to pick up a piece of
asparagus-grass, the most artificial and contemptible
grass that exists, lest the identity with which it had
been endowed by the brain of a madman, its dubious
scrap of consciousness, receive further humiliation
under the rubber O’Sullivan heels of “commuters,”
who, to the tune of a cent-in-the-slot Victrola, were
hurrying forward, in complete unconcern, over the
marble floors, patched with chewing-gum in every
possible gradation of being stamped flat.

NEW YORK AGAIN

WE left for the East some time in the beginning of October. How magnetic is the appeal of New York at this season of the year, when, like rooks returning to their king rookery, everybody comes crowding into the great city, into this perpendicular modern Babylon, with its proud, hard, dog-tooth outlines ! I have often walked down Fifth Avenue with a feeling of antipathy for what has met my eyes ; with a feeling of antipathy for the sharp, pretty women, so extravagantly dressed in furs that I knew had been flayed from the frozen backs of a thousand little wood-creatures ; with a feeling of antipathy for the shop-windows, with their display of expensive frippery ; with a feeling of antipathy for the polished automobiles at the curb, with their obsequious attendants ; but never have I experienced any emotions of this kind in the fall. Then, at the time of the first white frosts, when the homely New England countryside is fragrant with the sweet scent of little withered grapes, I could never find it in my heart to curse this town, which, like some vast battery, is capable of recharging with eager electricity the most inert brains, the most weary thighs and ankles. God, how I have seen the Flatiron Building stand out against an afternoon sky in November, stark and naked ! With what glee coursing through my live bones have I not approached Eighth Street, the air just tainted with the fresh cold of winter, to observe Mr. Robert Parker, that heavy-headed, glaucous-eyed Pyrrho of the

studios, full of fantastic spites and cloudy disparagements, hovering as if suspicious of the veracity of the very compass points of the city, to catch sight, a moment later, of the familiar faces of the Brevoort barbers peering out of their underground door like so many Guy de Maupassants ; and to be diverted at every turn by fresh Greenwich Village types, fantastical men with charming girls at their elbows, girls with free eyes and bodies that looked dedicated to the sole purpose of giving delight to artists in a hundred little hidden-away upstair studios. To sneer at Greenwich Village has always to me seemed unfair. In a world where the lives of most of us are so unspeakably drab, it offers many a green-hooded snake a very real refuge. I doubt but it would be found that the most civilised people in America live within a bowshot of Jefferson Market. If the young men and maidens are a trifle extravagant, so much the better. Their eccentricities have the effect of frightening away unpleasant people, so that honest writers may live as they like, unmolested by the hideous social tyrannies of a barbarous commercial age.

The first night of our arrival we put up at the Seville Hotel. After I had signed my name in the register, the clerk said : "Are you the Llewelyn Powys who writes about Africa ?" I took these words as a good omen, and retreated toward the elevator, trying to pass off as lightly as I might that most pleasant sensation of finding one's identity has made some kind of impression upon the great alien outside world.

We slept in the same room ; but because of my presence, my brother did not have a good night. " Merely to feel that there is another brain shut up

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Again*

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in the same room with me is sufficient to interfere with my sense of complete peace. What I love is a sense of oblivion, nothingness," he said. The next morning we went looking for rooms, and eventually found one in Waverly Place, an "enormous room," lit up on fine afternoons by the reflection of the sun from factory windows opposite. So ill-furnished was it, and so incapable were we of making it at all comfortable, that on fine mornings I used to do most of my writing in Washington Square, though even this plan was not always successful, because of the little bootblack boys, who, every two or three minutes, would come round importunately shouting, "Shine! Shine! Shine!"

When my brother was away, I used to fill up my afternoons and evenings with engagements; and now that I had become so poor, I was apprehensive lest my polite clothes might be stolen from me and even this means of escape be closed down. Arnold Shaw, my brother's frolicsome manager, had, so it happened, that very summer preserved his apartment intact from burglary by the use of a police-lock which had proved altogether too much for the jemmies of the bandits. When he came to see me, he urged me strongly to invest in one of these clever devices. "Burglars," he said, as he looked casually out of the blank, screenless windows, "probably, I should think, run through the houses of this street on an average of about once a month." Immediately my mind reverted to a magnificent over-coat I possessed, and already I began to experience a premonition of the misery I would suffer if it was taken from me. So it came to pass that my brother found himself the inhabitant of a room bare as a barn, and yet protected like a prison with the most

ingenious contrivance ever invented by man's *New York* brain. For, whenever he went out of the room, *Again* even so much as to wash his hands in the bathroom, an iron rod that was craftily inserted into the floor would, with an ugly clank, slip automatically into its place in the lock, rendering by this means our disagreeable garret, with its coal-bag and heap of splintered kindling, absolutely impregnable until I, from the inside, had executed certain delicate manipulations.

Never shall I forget the look of amazed wonder on the face of my friend Jack Kelly, when he dropped in to ask me to tea one day and found my door in full working order. Jack Kelly was a picturesque figure. Nothing used to please me better than to see him come striding round some corner with a devilish Irish thorn in his hand, and his magnificent chest covered with a brave corduroy waistcoat. And how the old bully used to enjoy his dinners at Broad's, eating great tenderloin steaks ("of the dun ox, you know") at his favourite table, with his matchless Anne Valentine at his side, sensitive and perceptive, listening to him discoursing to his friends on how he and she and one other sailed his yacht at large over the Atlantic and were entertained by the world of fashion at Cowes. Jack Kelly was, indeed, as fine a brave as I have ever seen, and not the kind of man that one would select by choice to cuckold. One day, as I was having my shoes polished on a raised chair outside Frank Shay's bookshop, I suddenly noticed Jack Kelly standing motionless in the middle of the street, with his eyes apparently concentrated upon the roof of Jefferson Market, where, I took it, must be a boy's kite, or a pigeon, or two amorous roof-cats at play.

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of Bridlegoose* I called out asking him what it might be that had caught his attention. He replied that he was studying the weather signs, having a mind to set sail that very afternoon to God only knew what distant port.

In spite, however, of the barrenness of our dwelling-place (the old black-and-tan terrier, Nip, in our father's mansion being housed better than we), there were moments in the day when we were happy ; especially when, after breakfast, after our coffee and rolls at the French pastry shop, we took a turn round Washington Square, full of talk about this or that. John would look with entertainment at the statue of Garibaldi, with its baggy trousers, and sword forever half drawn from its sheath, a veritable symbol of the feeble ineffectiveness of popular discontent, and with undisguised surprise at the countenance of Mr. Holly, the inventor—or discoverer, was it ?—of Bessemer steel. “Good Lord,” he once declared, “what a shame to have such an image here ! Why, the site is magnificent ! They ought to commission the most extravagant of all the artists in the Village to carve a monument to Priapus on this spot, a monument which, like the statue of Memnon, would utter a cry each morning, as soon as the sun spread its rays down Washington Place.” We used to like to wander under the English elms and look up through their naked branches, covered with the crinkled bark that was so dear to our eyes. In the same mood, in the springtime, we would go from our rooms to inspect the slow growth of a certain dock, which one day we had noticed coming up near the railings of the Benedict. We both of us felt strangely restored by daily observing the broad leaves of this simple plant widen and

widen, those same leaves that had cured our nettle-stings as children, and that had been used by the yeoman in the *Canterbury Tales* for keeping away from his sweating forehead the hot yellow sunshine of the Kentish highroad.

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Again*

What would disconcert us more than anything, on our return to our room to make my brother's bed, was the fact that the dust on the bare floor seemed in our absence to have been mysteriously and spontaneously generated into funny fluffy balls that had the shape and appearance of curled-up, hibernating, grey mice, and yet were light enough to roll over and over at the slightest flap of the sheet. There was only one bed to make, as I was sleeping on the roof, sleeping without a mattress, but wrapped well round with blankets and two red-baize curtains, which had at one time belonged to the "end room" at Montacute Vicarage.

HALL-BEDROOMS

In the early part of December my brother once more left for the West, and it became clear to me that if I was to support myself by my pen I would have to find a cheaper room than the spacious fortified barrack in which we had been living. If I could hire a hall-bedroom for ten or twelve dollars a month, I would be able, I thought, to get on all right. For several mornings I searched in the poorer streets toward the river. It was a peculiarly depressing occupation. Dressed in my old African red shirt and a pair of khaki trousers, I mounted scores of stone steps, steps worn and chipped, to pull at scores of broken bell-handles, in order to interview scores of bedraggled landladies. I had had no conception that such people were still living. It was amazing. One after another they stood before me, decrepit human alley-cats, with knots of grey unbrushed hair falling upon their soiled blouses, like the elf-locks one sees in the manes of aged mares that are past work, and yet retain a sufficient fund of energy to display certain vicious characteristics developed by them through long years of ill-usage. Quite apart from the degrading effect of penury, I think that the profession of renting rooms has a most evil influence on human beings. To make one's living out of providing so simple a necessity as a rain-proof roof must bring into play a kind of atavistic meanness, the meanness of a taloned female who has secured a good cleft in the rock or a good forked branch. How sordid and squalid were the rooms into which

I was conducted, rooms that smelt of gas, rooms that gave out the faint, chill aroma of damp, fly-blown wallpaper, rooms that effected one's spirits with the lugubrious, concentrated weight of all the forgotten rainy afternoons that had ever fallen upon New York City. Some of these old women would eye me with a kind of salacious avarice, others with an unmoved, bloodshot glare, as if they were already making exact calculations as to the number of soiled dollar-notes that my depravity and despair were likely to bring to their tattered purses, before I fell to even lower levels of life. With nervous tread I would tiptoe over the frayed oil-cloth carpets, to look out of the window, carpets that had, perhaps, been lying in the same place through the bitter Januaries and the humid Augests of sixty New York seasons, carpets worn bare to the boards below by the muddy, uneven boot-heels of numberless single-room bachelors. And to look out of these small back windows, with one of these hostile women at my side, women whose indrawn personalities were as powerful as the clinging, adhesive tentacles of a defiled fish, on to the backs of houses, with washtubs suspended from the nails by each window, on to desolate roofs and walls stained with filth and grime, was to receive a revelation as to the pernicious power that a foul human environment might have upon the mind. With a feeling of infinite nostalgia I remembered how once I had ridden over wide African plains, where the hoofs of my stallion had clicked against the bones of lions ; where there had been places so removed from mankind and the traps they lay for one another, that a sow rhinoceros could suckle her young, completely ignorant that there existed

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of Bridlegoose* in the world an erect anthropoid as unprecedented in its cunning and ferocity as *homo sapiens*.

I had often noticed a hotel on Sixth Avenue which advertised rooms at twenty-five cents a night, and it seemed to me that I might perhaps persuade the landlord of it to rent me one of these on a more permanent basis. After all, I thought, if I could have a small room where my clothes would be safe, and where I could do my typewriting, I would be happy enough. I turned into the place and climbed up a long flight of stairs, which led into a large waiting-room, where some twenty men were engaged in reading newspapers. The landlord approached me and I told him what I wanted. He was a competent fellow, with the disposition of a master of a workhouse, at once stern and kindly, but I was unable to interest him in my affairs. "This place would not do for you," he kept repeating. Eventually I persuaded him to show me the twenty-five cent rooms. They were cubicles opening on to a narrow central passage, which was dark as night. My guide urged me in a whisper to walk as quietly as possible along this grim catacomb, lest I should wake the sleepers on each side of me. I left the house, descending once more the wide staircase, each step of which was tipped with iron, never to enter it again. I used to look at it often enough, though, as I waited for the downtown elevated train at Eighth Street, craning my neck like a speckled starling on a roof-top, to get a better view of the waiting-room, which remained always full of men reading crumpled newspapers, with apparently no gaps in their ranks. And, as I looked at that melancholy, dispirited interior, I would think of those others, further within, who

like rats in their darkened, dolorous holes were *Hall-*
enjoying for "25 cents" a blessed respite from the *Bedrooms*
heartless, ferret-like fecocity prevailing on the other
side of the swinging-door encased in triple brass,
of this retreat "for bachelors only."

As a matter of fact, all my trouble had been wasted ; for when I announced to my landlady that I intended to leave, she suggested that I occupy a small room on the same landing as the staircase which led to the roof, a bedroom which I found in every way suitable, and where I was to live for the next few months. Charles Divine, the poet and short story writer, inhabited the floor below me, and I would often consult him as to the secrets of the trade we followed, and envy him his mastery of a technique which still seemed to me extremely intricate and extremely difficult. For in spite of all my efforts I remained very poor. I would spend hour upon hour studying a little paper called "How to Write!" With envy in my heart I would read the autbiographical accounts of how this or that author became successful, became the master of so many thousand of dollars a year, in no time at all. I would study this remarkable publication in a cheap restaurant frequented by draymen, a restaurant which presented a plate-glass front to two separate streets. There we would sit like queer fish in an illuminated aquarium, for all men's eyes to see. Now and again we would get up and leave our places and go to the counter to have our cups of thick white china filled with coffee at five cents a cup. And it would be so cold often outside, with the snow fluttering down on the pavement, that one could not fail to be grateful for the warmth of the place, for the warm atmosphere that enveloped one

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as soon as one pushed the door open, an atmosphere smelling of dirty sawdust, tobacco, and stale human sweat. Sometimes I would have my lunch as well as my breakfast in this establishment, but I never did so without regretting it afterwards. The food was more fit for the debased appetite of famished hyenas than for human beings ; and one could not help wondering how long ago it must have been since the day when the grass-eaters, at whose greasy bones we gnawed, had been driven in from their pastures for the last time. There I would sit, with my elbows resting on the table of sham marble, reading my absurd magazine and filling my coffee with more and more sugar, dipped out of a bowl with a spoon coated over with grains of sweetness congealed by the coffee of earlier guests ; and as I sipped the brown syrup I would look at a heap of unripe grapefruit, whose pale lemon-coloured skins, more than anything else, seemed to suggest the bitter meagreness of the provender upon which at this period of my life it had pleased the good God that I should live. But my moods of depression would never last long. I would soon find my spirits rising. Could I not, if the worst came to the worst, go up-town to one of the houses of the great, where at least I should be able to smoke a good cigarette ? For in these days I gave up smoking entirely.

It was the *Freeman* that really kept me afloat. For some reason or other my style of writing hit the fancy of Mr. Nock. My paper on Nicholas Culpeper, which had gone to every magazine in the city, won from him the greatest commendation, and was followed by several other literary appreciations of old-fashioned, out-of-the-way

English writers. Meanwhile, Mr. Van Wyck Brooks began to feel more confidence in my power as a reviewer. I used to enjoy going to the *Freeman*. The atmosphere of the office seemed to reflect the benevolent rulings of its master. As one mounted the staircase, one was as likely as not to catch a glimpse of the Editor of the *Freeman* expatiating to three or four trig maidens on some abstruse point which presumably had to do with single tax. One would see this interior vignette and hurry on, carrying in one's mind, however, the engaging picture of a grey-haired, elderly gentleman, who looked like the sporting publican of Glanville Wotton just home from the Blackmore Vale Point to Point races, entertaining three very pretty ladies, who, in the most graceful postures imaginable, were perched on the edge of the table. Indeed, the charming picture would remain in one's mind even while Van Wyck Brooks, with nervous, reserved affability, was shaking one's hand as a preliminary to looking over his shelves, as one stood at the door in extreme embarrassment, trying to preserve one's balance, in a silence that each moment was growing more and more audible. Mr. Walter Fuller used at that time to be associated with the journal, and I would often go direct to the room of this Dorset man, in whose company I felt, naturally enough, completely at my ease. Mr. Walter Fuller had a heart of pure gold. In any New York office other than the *Freeman* he would have appeared out of place. He possessed the kind of goodness that it is difficult for an American business man to appreciate, the goodness of a clod of earth out of which a plant of clover is growing, the goodness of a basket of last years' pippins, the

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goodness of a soft-crusted cottage-loaf baked in a village oven. As one talked to him and heard him declaim against the crude noises of Macdougal Street, or the latest iniquity that had been perpetrated by some unscrupulous money-magnate, one realised in a moment how impossible it was for him to learn to dance to the American tune, and this in spite of the fact that he had won for his partner so splendid, so triumphant, an amazon as Crystal Eastman. As he stood fumbling with the papers on his desk, he would remind me of a barn-door owl who had been betrayed into forsaking the ivy-mantled tower of Sturminster Newton, and, having crossed the Atlantic with soft, downy flight, finds itself on the top of an iron-ribbed skyscraper, surrounded by flocks of over-sized American robins infuriated at the presence of so homely an apparition. A very different type was Francis Neilson, whom I ran into one day on the second landing. He had been a Liberal member of Parliament and had all the good-natured, hearty bluster of a person of that kind. Yet in spite of the fact that he selected of his own free will to stay in a hotel like the Ritz-Carlton, there was something extremely honest about the man. I certainly felt this on the occasions when, having made my way through swarms of loud, overdressed people on the palatial ground floor of his favourite residence, and having mounted the elevator manipulated by a pale funkey, and having walked down a corridor on a silent, puffed-up carpet, I found myself at last eating hot toast and listening to the exuberant, semi-philosophic observations of this rich man, who, although hardly prepared to sell all he had to give to the poor, yet could not be dissuaded, within certain

well-defined limits, from doing whatever was in *Hall*-
his power to prevent oppression and foster the *Bedrooms*
cause of freedom.

At this time, also, I received encouragement from sources other than the *Freeman*. One morning, as I was returning from my bath to my small upstairs room, carrying my sponge, soap, towel, and the key to unlock my door (for I had not yet overcome my dread lest some sneak-thief should snatch up my superb greatcoat), my tooth-glass slipped from its position in the crook of my elbow, and, glancing on to the banister, fell with a crash to the floor below. Fearing lest some fellow lodger might cut his feet on the broken glass, I went downstairs again to pick up as many of the pieces as I could see. I had hardly been on my knees a minute, when a door opened, and a young man, a perfect stranger to me, came out on the landing. There was something so intellectual about his face, something so candid and disarming, that I stayed talking with him for several minutes. He asked me what I did and I told him that I made a living by writing about Africa. He then remarked that only that week he had bought six copies of the *North American Review* because it contained an essay called "A Leopard by Lake Elmenteita," by a man named Llewelyn Powys, which he considered a rare example of true, living prose in the best English tradition. And as I knelt there on that dusty carpet, picking up tiny fragments of splintered crystal, just as a pigeon might pick up grains of rice, I felt a glow of elation at hearing such praise of my work from this stranger with a great cerebral moon-face and the handshake of a farmer. I should have felt

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PATCHIN PLACE

A LITTLE before my brother had left, a mysterious letter had arrived for me from some one in Patchin Place, with an invitation for tea on a certain afternoon. The handwriting was spider-like and intellectual, and reminded me of Oscar Wilde's handwriting as I remembered it in his letters to Louis Wilkinson. I wrote, accepting the invitation, and, with that humiliating inability to foresee the future from which all mortal men suffer, tossed the note over to John to ask him whether it was the script of a man or woman. No suspicion, no inkling, did I have that the white page that fluttered from the table to the bare, dusty floor was the first token of a relationship that was to have so much significance in my life.

On the appointed afternoon I found my way to the famous alley, and was presently enchanted to discover myself sitting down to tea before a bright fire in a lamp-lit room filled with delightful old-fashioned furniture. These rooms suggested to my mind my rooms in the Old Court of Corpus, and were entirely different from anything I had seen elsewhere in New York, as, indeed, was the poise, the intellectual intensity, the freedom from preconceptions, as of a child uncontaminated by the world, of my grave, delicately ironic hostess, whose round, white arms seemed to me then, as I looked at them in the flickering light of the cannel-coal fire, as delectable as dairy junket, and whose fair hair, worn so as to conceal as far as possible the prominence of an over-high forehead, was of a fairer and

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more fine texture than ever was the hair of that lovely chatelaine who so long ago would sit beneath the glittering holly trees of Brittany, watching her madcap children playing in the coarse seaside grass. And as the weeks and months followed one another, I fell more and more under the influence of the sweet security of Patchin Place, until all my other familiar haunts seemed, one by one, to grow dull—until, indeed, I felt no contentment of spirit unless I knew that I was on that very day to find myself knocking on the darkened door of this particular sanctuary of civilisation. And as the fortunate acquaintance grew, and I became more and more privileged, the reluctance I felt at going back to sleep “on the roof” steadily increased, until, at length, it came to such a pass that I would rather have “gone copping” than have returned to Waverly Place, and, in truth, could not be persuaded to do so on nights when it rained or snowed. For on those dark January nights, when a freezing snow was falling, when but to think of the streets was to remember horses one had seen in the afternoon struggling helplessly on the ground, proud horses who would never again eat hay in darkened subterranean stables, but were probably even now being carried away to the knackers, with hairy, frozen hocks protruding out of a lorry, the small room of my lady’s home would appear to me the safest, the snuggest retreat in the world. With its iron grate filled with live-coals that from Michaelmas to All Fools’ Day were never allowed to go out, and which toward midnight would glow with a most divine glow, the little chamber, whose single window, heavily protected with winter curtains, looked out upon a sheltered back-yard, reminded

me of a room in a fisherman's cottage on the edge of the Chesil beach at Portland, into which I had once stepped, a lost traveller coming in out of the darkness, out of the turbulent winds and drifting salt spray, to see a woman sewing at a table and an old man mending tarred fishing-nets before just such a fire of sea-coal. As behind the whitened stone walls of that simple habitation human beings could be secure, could hear each other speak, could thread needles, and turn down the lamp when it smoked, though outside, within fifty yards of them, enormous uplifted Atlantic waves broke themselves with a deafening roar and an appalling resurgent eddy upon a gigantic barrier of pebbles, so in this tiny bed chamber one could feel at peace and out of harm's way, while, hour after hour, the lighted city with its frozen heart trembled and contracted and awaited the coming of dawn.

In those days, as I slipped out in the early hours of the morning, like a fox from a poultry-yard of delectable White Wyandottes, I used to regard the caretaker of the alley with the utmost trepidation, looking back at her with a slanting apprehensive eye as she poked about with her besom between the iron railings which protected each small cat-soured garden lying between pavement and house. She was a German woman, who had lived in Patchin Place for forty years, had lived there amongst her ash-cans and the leaves of the ailanthus trees—leaves that in April open out like the webbed feet of goslings—since the day when at Dorchester, in the county of Dorset, John remembered seeing the skin at the top of my head fluttering up and down because, forsooth, the bone of my infant's skull had not closed up. She was very stout, so stout, in

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fact, that her two legs had been hard put to it to support so great a weight, and had developed varicose veins, which necessitated her winding vast bandages about them. During the summer months it was her custom to sit all day long at her open window, her breasts resting on the sill like a pair of enormous pumpkins. Common people would laugh at her behind her back and call her "The Venus."

Certainly from the way she used to watch the ash-cans at the corner and abuse the tenants if they mixed their cinders and garbage, one would have thought that the chief concern of her mind was with sordid matters. Nothing was further from the truth. Somewhere concealed within those mountainous rolls of flesh there existed a spirit refined and romantic. I used often in later days to sit in the old woman's room and get her to tell me stories about Germany, stories which had for me the beauty of certain simple country objects, like the weathered boards from the wing of a windmill, or the worn curving handle of an old scythe. She spoke broken English, and I would sit opposite her on a rocking-chair, enthralled by the stammering speech of this peasant woman, who, with the most uncouth phraseology, was able to bring so vividly before my eyes certain experiences of her childhood. For her mind always reverted to Germany, always reverted to that extraordinary Northern land, inhabited by a people whose natures are capable only of the profound feeling of so many milch-cows who go up and down their pastures lowing for their lost calves. But as I rested in her little room, indolently watching through the window the movements of an old tomcat, victor of a hundred battles,

with but the shreds of ears left on his flat head, she *Patchin Place* would tell me of her home, and how once, as a little girl, she had walked all day through the Black Forest to fetch some flax which her neighbours had told her was of a better quality than the flax with which she and her mother were accustomed to spin, and how, in the late afternoon, coming into a dell, with the sun slanting through the leaves "like faëry land," she had suddenly seen a group of stags "with golden branches on their heads." So direct, so poetical, was her talk, that I carried away with me certain glimpses of Germany as clear in my mind as old prints, so that later I would almost feel as if I, even I, had been at the side of the young, awkward Gretchen, as she made her way along those meandering woodcutter-tracks that penetrated so far into the great medieval forest, and are still frequented, even in our day, by animals as delicately designed as unicorns "with golden branches on their heads."

Poor old "Mother Wiedeswaller," she never saw Germany again; for just as she was preparing to go home and had made inquiries about her ticket, she was taken violently ill, and was carried away to Bellevue Hospital. I went to see her there. She was lying on her side, and reminded me of a hippopotamus I once saw supporting its vast wounded bulk on its forelegs, unable, in spite of all its efforts, to re-enter the water of the near-by lake. She recognised me at once. "Misser Powys," she said, "I come back next week."

I was glad enough to escape from the melancholy room, where each pale head, upon each pale sheet, seemed to represent a final disaster, no longer now

The Verdict of Bridlegoose to be concealed or evaded. How I hated the competent nurse at the door, trained to display no kind of emotion in the face of all these pitiful dramas ! How I shrank from the busy attendants whom I met in the corridors outside, pushing horribly light-wheeled cots, containing bandaged figures, already too weak to protest, to I knew not what hygienic rooms of surgical efficiency ; and how, as I at last got out into the street and was passing the “ flower shop,” I chuckled to myself to see two young doctors in white coats beck and nod at a pair of stenographers, who, with the light step of holiday girls on the Weymouth esplanade, were advancing along the opposite pavement ! Yes, as I walked away from that Bastille of Sorrow, it gave me brave consolation to realise that nothing, not death, nor disease, nor piercing agony, is capable of cowing, of shaming into quiescence, that incorrigible heathen force that we call life, and which is as quick to jump, and as inimical to cessation as a little red flea on a nipping frosty morning. As I had already surmised, “ Mother Wiedeswaller ” was not speaking correctly when she said, “ Misser Powys, I come back next week ” ; for by the following Thursday, instead of being back in her room, sitting over her stove, in which in her thrifty German way she had for two score years burnt her garbage, a proceeding from which she derived every day a peculiar satisfaction, seeing that it meant that refuse itself was made to contribute to her comfort, she was lying in state in an undertaker’s parlour—a monumental paragon of cleverly disguised corruption—somewhere at the lower end of Christopher Street. The money which she had saved, and which she had kept so carefully in aprons and stockings,

was sent to her relations in Germany, to the extreme annoyance of her immediate neighbours.

"The party what done everythink, he gets nothink," said an old man to me, who, in spite of a congenital dislike of any form of physical activity other than the relighting of the stump-end of a cheap cigar, had, upon occasions, been persuaded by the old lady to perform certain odd jobs for her in the alley.

EXCURSIONS

NOTHING at this time used to give me more satisfaction than to go for excursions out of New York with my chosen companion. If we had only a few hours allotted us, we would take the steamer to the Statue of Liberty, and, following round the little island, would eventually come to a certain strip of deserted sand, where we could sit in the sun, with the forked ridge of the city rising out of the grey waters in happy perspective. It used to delight us to find shells and small scraps of water-moulded glass and even pieces of seaweed within so short a distance of the financial centre of the world.

Long afterwards, when I had occasion to visit a firm of brokers—down-town brokers—being in the fortunate position after the death of my father of having money of my own to invest, I came fully to appreciate how completely removed from the rippling waves of concealed beaches were the thoughts of these argute, obtuse men, whose chief interest in life is juggling with money. I remember being shown into a kind of hall, where bidding was about to take place. In front of several rows of deep, leather-covered sofas was a large board, like those that tell of the arrival of trains in a station, with certain figures upon it. The market had not yet opened, but already there were men collected in groups, each with a cigar “in his face,” who periodically spat into the brazen cuspidors with which the room was proudly and ostentatiously furnished. And, by God, they did look like a

bagful of foxes ; and the more I observed their *Excursions* denaturalised, inhuman faces, the more uneasy did I feel with regard to my poor patrimony—so uneasy, in fact, that before I had spoken one word of business to anybody, I bolted down the elevator, and away over the hills ; for I tell you, those boys looked to me as if they could pluck a Hallow-e'en goose as well as another—none better. What had impressed me as much as anything was the happy confidence these brokers obviously felt in life. Every word they spoke, every movement they made, if it was only to take a toothpick out of their waistcoat pocket, told how far they were from suspecting existence of concealing any dainty deceptions. Because they had had no hand in digging the trenches which brought the water from far-off springs to their nickel-plated cloak-room taps, because they had forgotten that each of their tight offices stood upon raw Manhattan rock, not so very far down underground, their vision of life, and the vision of life of their sons and daughters, had gradually become so divorced from the spirit of the quick earth that it was now practically impossible for them so much as to perceive the divine quiver capable of producing on the lawns of the Island of the Statue of Liberty little white-clover flowers. To talk with the average business man is an experience not soon to be forgotten. These lickpennies have the mental development of a set of professional golf-players ; why, the grey donkey under High Chaldon, which looks up now and then from its thistles to observe the weather-signs, has infinitely more sense of existing than they ! Most of them hardly realise they are alive, before their routine days, their routine thoughts,

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their newspaper-magazine-clubmen thoughts, come to an abrupt end, and they are carried away to a hideous vault, in a hideous cemetery, their coffins covered with ostentatious hothouse flowers, all wired together by commercial hands after the manner of a pagan rite which still lingers on, though with little meaning, into an age where even the grave is deprived of its dignity.

Sometimes we would visit Governor's Island, and from the other side of a prairie-like expanse, albeit from a much nearer position than the beach on the Island of the Statue of Liberty, look back at the city. I recollect once seeing it rise up from behind the hindquarters of a disconsolate, saddle-galled mule, which, with a sneering expression upon its smart, long-shaped face, stood in the near foreground, trying to bite, with aged, elongated teeth, at its own backside. We would walk to the furthest end of the Island, where beyond a row of whitewashed posts we could sit down and watch the great liners steer for the open sea, with the music of a sea-bell in our ears, a sea-bell belonging to a buoy in mid-channel, which caused to come over the water a sound of distant sadness, as though through fathoms of grey wintry depths, we were hearing a dirge sung by mermen monks over the stiff fish-bones of a Neckan, who never, never again would sit upon a summer headland, "the Baltic Sea along." If we had more than a few hours, we would go to Staten Island and visit Prince's Bay. Here was a strip of coast that in winter would be completely deserted. Here we could walk along a real beach, under a cliff, toward a lighthouse which stood on a hill by itself, with a lane leading up to it from the shore—a lane, in the

grass of which, one afternoon, we found a quantity of toadflax, or "dead men's bones," as the old light-house-keeper told us he called them. This man's house was overgrown with ivy, and each side of it, according to the way of the wind, was used by sparrows for a roosting-place. Very happy I used to be on cold winter afternoons, returning to a warm fire for tea, carrying from this seaside cove some rare vignette in my head, such as would have delighted Theocritus—the picture of a fisherman, bent double, against a darkened sky, pulling his net into a black boat—taken away in one's memory like a charm against the affronts of modern life, against the jarring clangour of the turnstiles on the elevated railways, or the physiognomies of the Jewish lawyers, who used to cluster about the soiled door of Jefferson Market prison, like a flock of Pharaoh's chickens battenning upon corruption.

Once I visited this favourite seashore of Prince's Bay on a summer morning. My brother was with me, and after we had traileed along the edge of a hayfield, grown high with tasselled flowering-grasses, we climbed down the cliff, to find the beach strewn with the bodies of dead fish, done to death apparently by some pernicious chemical or oil with which the water had been contaminated. Indeed, right in front of us we saw one struggling along at the top of the water, upside down, like the fish that are depicted sometimes in the curling waves of old oil paintings, only in this case obviously taking its unnatural position not because of the approach of any dolphin-drawn chariot, but because of some frightful internal torment. Immediately John, in spite of all my protestations, advanced into the water, and standing with the sea up to his waist,

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made a series of clutches at the silver, slippery, exposed belly, with his long, bony hands. Eventually, to my surprise, he actually did succeed in snatching it out of the water. After I had watched him kill it by banging its head against a rock, I persuaded him to reclimb the cliff and return to the hayfield, having no mind that we should spend all the precious hours of our day together retrieving these unfortunate creatures from their evil torment, especially since I would not have dared to eat any of them.

On other occasions, we visited the canal near Newark, a lovely, disused canal, that now, alas, is to be drained and made into a speedway. I and my friend have walked by its banks at each season of the year ; in springtime, when the pipers first began to call, their gay chirruping sounding from concealed places in each damp swamp, as though somewhere, under the skunk-cabbages, amid the tinkling of sleigh-bells, little elves in their peaked winter caps were engaged in noisy, preoccupied barter on an April highway ; in summer, when fishermen under shady trees angled for catfish, extraordinary catfish, whose spiked backs availed them little enough, pardi, when they once had a barbed hook in their upper lip. And in winter we would come there also, when all was deserted, and the snow lay crisp on the towpath, and it was possible to cross to the other side of the canal by sliding down white slabs of ice, which rested against each bank, until we reached the middle, where all was level and sound.

Coincident with my discovery of Patchin Place came the bettering of my fortunes. *Ebony and Ivory* had been refused by Boni and Liveright, by B. W. Huebsch, by Knopf, by Seltzer, by the Sea-

Gull Press, and I was at a loss to whom next to *Excursions* send it, until I suddenly remembered that Mr. Symon Gould, who had always, I knew, preserved a kind of romantic faith in my brother's genius, together with a suspicion that if properly directed it could be converted into "yellowbacks," had lately become prosperous through the publication of a small handbook on Coué. Notwithstanding a certain lack of *finesse* in the amenities of social relationships displayed by this young Jew, I liked him. Had he not shown himself a man of no mean parts, in that, on one occasion, he had had the astounding temerity to overreach no less a person than Mr. Frank Harris himself, just as an impudent jackal might take a happy-go-lucky snap at the bum of some old man-eating lion with porcupine-quills in its paws? Indeed, Mr. Gould always put me in mind of a red-legged Palestine jackal, a wise Palestine jackal, who knew how to pad it past a thousand gins, were they covered with wild asses' dung never so cleverly, and was familiar likewise with each disused garden-pipe giving access to the vineyards of the Gentiles. I appeared with my manuscripts under my arm just when the sales of the Coué book were at their height, and when Mr. Gould, seated at a desk in a spacious office on Fifth Avenue, was seriously contemplating launching out into the publishing business. He accepted *Ebony and Ivory* out of hand, and within a month had the book printed and published, advertising and "boosting" it with concentrated energy.

Merely to think of Frank Harris in association with Mr. Symon Gould was to me extremely diverting. Louis Wilkinson had some time before given me a letter of introduction to the old buccaneer, and

I had had lunch with him at the Lafayette. Here was a man, looking like a race-course bookie, a company promoter, who was acquainted with every writer of his time ; a man who had received into his round, tufted ears the intimate confidences of no less a person than Thomas Carlyle ; who referred quite casually to the most formidable Frenchman of the last century as " Guy " ; and who, with the utmost gravity, confessed that, at their first meeting, Walter Pater had not seemed to " take to him much." Sitting on the other side of a small round table, decorated with olives and hard red radishes, I was reduced to attentive silence, as one story succeeded another, interspersed with glances from under dark eyebrows that affected me like dagger-stabs. Yet how generous and courteous the old veteran was, standing for the charges of our luncheon and driving me back to my wretched house in a taxicab ! And what vitality he had, this companion of Wilde's ! His vitality alone amounted to genius. In spite of his bowler hat and his greatcoat lined with shabby fur—jackal's fur, perhaps—he belonged surely to another age, to an age more vital than ours. When I said good-bye to him, I felt I had been salting my celery with some Benvenuto Cellini, full of words and a divine fury. I found, too, that this impression was confirmed long afterwards, when the first volume of his autobiography fell into my hands : for in spite of the numerous lapses in literary tact with which the book abounds, I felt nothing but admiration for a man who could compose a volume of this kind and boldly sign his name to its title-page. I dare say there are others who would experience quite a different emotion after the

perusal of its pages, but I for a great many years have held to the opinion that far from there being too many, there are too few erotic books accessible to the ordinary reader. I think when the mood is upon us we should be allowed to read *just what we like*. It is a fact to be noted, and perhaps to be regretted, that one soon becomes sated with reading pornography, and for this reason I can see no cause or just impediment why we should be deprived of such harmless personal diversions, when on rainy afternoons we climb up into the apple-loft, tired with playing battledore and shuttlecock in the schoolroom. The way we Occidents plot to prevent one another from enjoying some of the most childish and natural amusements of life has always amazed me. I suppose those in authority, for the most part men of substance obsessed by the possessive impulse in one form or another, wish to keep this river of subterranean radium as much in control as possible, lest it should seep up through the stones of their cellars and set their money-boxes afloat, and there would presently be found nobody to sit on their revolving stools and assist them in their predatory enterprises. For myself, I like upon occasions to get hold of a good bawdy book ; and I believe, if the spiritual health of the community were to be considered, that there are many turgid and insensitive minds, up and down the country, whose imaginations could only be roused by such gay Epistles to the Colossians.

CERTAIN CELEBRITIES

THE publication of *Ebony and Ivory* and *Thirteen Worthies* had a very beneficent influence upon my days. I made no money out of them, but on the other hand I found it more easy to get my stories and essays published, so much so that I was presently able to move into Patchin Place, into the rooms that had just been vacated by Mr. Dudley Digges. I now, in order to get as much fresh air as possible, made a habit of doing all my writing in the little back-yard. As a place to work in it had only two drawbacks ; the first of these being that a terrier dog was sent out there each morning, and these diurnal canine visitations gave the mould about the roots of the ailanthus trees a most unpleasant smell, that reminded me, when it reached my nostrils diluted by the air of the yard, of the smell of dry Osborne Biscuit crumbs. The second drawback was only in evidence during the hot summer months, when there was danger of my being distracted from the crafty composition of my prose by the proximity of a young lady, in a room opposite, who, with song and laughter and a dozen pretty postures, would dress by her open window. Fortunately for me the little slug-a-bed never woke till mid-day, so that I did have some hours each morning undisturbed by troubling glimpses of white fingers held to red lips, of white peeled-willow limbs.

I used to meet many literary people in Patchin Place. It was here that I saw Jules Romains for the first time, a true Frenchman if ever there was one. Only to watch him shrug his shoulders, only

to watch the way he raised his eyebrows, as he took in, with genial relish, the separate sapidity of each new caller, was instructive. I can speak no French, so I was able to understand little or nothing of what he said ; but later in the evening, as we sat opposite each other at Broad's, breaking up the shells of two lobsters, I certainly came to appreciate the delicacy of his mind, as it flitted, like a five-spotted burnet-moth, from one topic of conversation to another. He was a pacifist in the War ; and we asked how he would have liked it if the Germans had been allowed to overrun France. “ Je ne l'aurais pas aimé du tout, mais j'aurais préféré même cela à la mort de trois millions de mes compatriotes.”

One evening I was invited by Theodore Dreiser to meet some friends of his. In the very centre of the room sat Dreiser himself, entirely ignorant of the fact that the guests he had brought together were not mixing well, and ready at a moment's notice to forget all of us as he followed the flounderings of his own wayward imagination, which, like a mammoth whale, with snortings and spoutings, plunged onward over the limitless ocean of life to the Isles of the Blest. Suddenly there entered upon us a youth, a little the worse for drink, whom everybody called Scotty, and who, I learnt afterwards, was the novelist, Scott Fitzgerald. There was something about this young man, who came in from “ Tough Man's Bend ” with a bottle in his hand, that I liked extremely. He had evidently never met Dreiser before ; and, far gone in his cups as he was, he addressed the elder novelist with maudlin deference. It was as though some young Dick Lovelace had come bursting into Ben Jonson's room ; only, when one looked more closely at this

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boy's face, one noticed that it had a weak, pretty, blue-eyed, modern look that would have been curiously inappropriate in more heroic days. Mencken, Carl Van Vechten, and Ernest Boyd were among Dreiser's guests. I always had liked what I had heard about Mencken, but I never expected to meet any one so squat, a veritable tweedledum, with curtailed, schoolboy jacket, making schoolboy jokes and talking schoolboy talk with a kind of boisterous *bonhomie*. Though I saw at a glance that his nature entirely lacked that finer edge which some of us perhaps rate too highly, I felt that there was no nonsense about him. I felt, in fact, that he was in possession of a far sounder intellect than, for example, that other zany of God's Nordic circus, Mr. G. K. Chesterton. Carl Van Vechten sat silent on a hard chair, his clever head drooping slightly to the left. Indeed, I have never been in the company of this famous wit when he did not appear to me to be drooping like an aging madonna-lily that has lost its pollen and has been left standing in a vase which the parlour-maid has forgotten to refill with fresh water. Yet this is not quite true either; for I do remember seeing him light up in the company of Miss Rebecca West, at a certain *Dial* dinner, while we others sat in a doleful ring, like toads on toadstools, before two flashy fairies. Miss West seemed to me to be abusing her talent and originality for the satisfaction of obtaining a reputation for "smartness" in modish literary circles. But perhaps my rusticity, a certain agrarian quality in me, is of necessity averse to the kind of verbal levity, the clever badinage, that seemed to come so readily to the lips of this clever lady and Mr. Van Vechten. "A gloomy old

fellow," was how she dubbed me, when somebody mentioned my name in her presence a year later.

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To the right of Carl Van Vechten at this party in Dreiser's room sat Ernest Boyd, with his silky red beard well combed, feeling, as he told me, "not very well." I have always been disposed to respect this urbane, versatile translator. I always like the sound of his voice, soft as the voice of a wood-pigeon cooing over its two white eggs (wood-pigeons never have more than two white eggs) in its stick-nest below. I have always regretted that I never had an opportunity of talking for any length of time with him, but wherever I went I was sure to *hear* his voice. I remember hearing it suddenly over my shoulder, when under the eye of my generous host, I was doing my best, without any show of embarrassment, to select from a most confused, elaborate, and to me intimidating, menu-card at the Century Club an appropriate luncheon. I remember that particular luncheon as having confirmed in me a prejudice that I have always felt against clubs, especially clubs of the more exclusive kind, where everybody is trying, as best he may, to live up to some objective standard of deportment which I suspect of having its origin, if its origin could ever be traced, in the fussy, exacting taste of some wretched head-waiter, who, if one deviates in the least degree from the rules accepted by his punctilious, spellbound mind, as for instance by ordering turnips with shad, raises a discreet left eyebrow, more alarming to the members of such institutions than the still, small voice in a Syrian desert. I was led into the library of the Century Club to inspect the books there. How curious, in such a place, to see an edition of Poe's poems

scrawled over with his own handwriting, to mark how he dotted his "i's" with little complete circles, to observe all this, and actually to hold between one's fingers in the centre of this fortress of senile Philistines, so treasured a scrap of sublime imagination! I felt like a Celtic slave, who, with infinite care, was secretly preserving in his cupped hand a flake of sea foam blown into some great Roman seaside hall, where a sumptuous feast is in progress, because in his captivity it reminded him of the Atlantic and the wild cliffs of Wales.

It was at about this time that I met the two English novelists, Gilbert Cannan and Hugh Walpole. Hugh Walpole I only shook hands with, but I had an opportunity of watching him as he chatted society chat, over his teacup, to a roomful of admiring, but (our hostess excepted) quite peculiarly stupid, women. As soon as I was introduced, I remembered that I had sat next to him while attending history lectures at Cambridge—Walpole of Emmanuel, I remembered him quite well. I think there must have been something nicer about him in those days, for that afternoon I came to the conclusion that I did not like men of letters to be too plump or to possess too agreeable tea-party manners.

I certainly could not quarrel with Gilbert Cannan on either of those scores; for when I met him, the dry old stationary heron kept looking about Paul Rosenfeld's room as though it were filled with birds of alien feather. "Americans don't know what good manners are," he said to my companion. "And Englishmen don't know what bad manners are," came back the very just retort. But, however impatient one might grow with the air of

intellectual superiority worn by him as naturally *Certain Celebrities*
as the spats on his feet, one could not help respecting
this lanky man, of whom Oscar Browning had
predicted great things, long ago, in his rooms at
King's. I talked to him about Africa, and it
became very clear to me that he possessed the rare
gallantry and magnanimity of temper which dis-
tinguish certain Englishmen, as, for example, John
Galsworthy.

I remember this evening in Paul Rosenfeld's
rooms particularly clearly, because when we stepped
out into Irving Place, it was snowing; and as we
walked along Fourteenth Street, and down Fifth
Avenue, I took the utmost delight in watching the
flutterings of the myriad delicate unsmutched
morsels, soft as the neck-feathers of Sam Hodder's
white geese, and so light that their descent could be
arrested by a single thread of my lady's hair.

THE SALVATION-ARMY BAND

It was sufficient merely to set eyes on Paul Rosenfeld to appreciate the diathesis of his personality. Plump as a grain-fed pheasant, he was a man of brave parts and deep culture. Like so many artists, he was extremely sensitive to criticism, but sensitive more perhaps on behalf of his friends than on behalf of himself. One had only to use such a phrase as "inspired photographer" in connection with the name of Mr. Alfred Stieglitz, and he would "go up into the air" as surely and rapidly as the lizard gardener in *Alice in Wonderland* shot up the chimney.

The Stieglitz group were always a source of entertainment to their friends. With their dedicated master marching on before, with "The O'Keefe" to hand round a multi-coloured tambourine, with Mr. Marin, his wry lips to a trumpet, with Mr. Herbert Seligmann with his cheeks to the big bassoon, which in spite of all his blowing made no sound, and with Sherwood Anderson, the new convert, giving a heart-to-heart prayer at every market-conduit, they pass down the great highway to an enviable immortality. Mr. Stieglitz, in his black cassock, conducting people round the rooms of the Montross Gallery, always put me in mind of Mr. Stucky, the loquacious verger of Sherborne Abbey, who, after a late meat-tea of toasted sardines, was used to discourse at large to travel-stained visitors on the flat flagstones of the Lady Chapel, under which, in his opinion, were concealed the royal bones of Æthelwulf, brother of King Alfred

the Great. Mr. Stieglitz, it cannot be denied, *The Salvation-Army Band*
knows his subject, and has done much to educate the citizens of New York City in the matter of modern paintings ; but although he has the notable distinction of being the first American critic to appreciate Pablo Picasso, he has never, at any time, not even, one fears, as he sat warming his arctics over his celebrated stove in " 291," realised that there are occasions in life when it is best to meditate upon the precious dust of kings in silence.

But however angry Paul Rosenfeld becomes on account of one's levity, one cannot really feel angry with him in return, for the simple reason that the man has a deep and generous heart, and this quite apart from the fact that he can write prose that has the effect of drawing the poison out of one's tail. Paul Rosenfeld's style has to be reckoned with. At its worst, it is true, it does remind one, as an amusing critic once suggested, of " a merchant of Samarkand unrolling with slow deliberation sashes of silk," but at its best it carries one's imagination on strange flights. And how generous Mr. Rosenfeld is ! How free with his money ! Many an oyster, many a good duckling, have I eaten at his expense, at the Yale Club, or on one occasion at a Syrian restaurant, side by side with Mr. Stark Young, the grave critic of the theatre, who, as the seasons pass, comes more and more to appreciate the society of New York City, and who was once described to me by Mr. Reginald Pole, that long-neglected ghost of Hamlet's father, as " the leader of the young intelligentsia."

But not only has Paul Rosenfeld fed me, he has clothed me also. When I was spending a winter in

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the Catskill Mountains, where it was cold as the devil, he must needs present me with two blankets, the finest, by God, that I ever saw, made out of the wool of ewe lambs, gleaming-white, and warm as polar-bear skins.

I once visited the Metropolitan Museum with him, and he sat me down before an enormous Persian carpet. At first I was as oblivious to its sumptuous appeal as any rook-boy who had been brought in from a field of sprouting barley ; but gradually, as I sat there, looking at its silken tapestried woof and at its intricate design of trees and flowers, I came to understand something of the pleasure that my friend was deriving from the silent contemplation of so superb an example of patient craftsmanship. Truly, it was as if no artistic achievement of the past escaped the notice of this world-citizen who was acting as my gracious monitor. It was as though the unique faculty had been given him of evaluating, with a fine personal discrimination, every piece of stone that has been chipped, every piece of wood that has been carved, every piece of clay that has been modelled, and every piece of cloth that has been woven since our ancestors first separated themselves from the animals. It was he who showed me the seven lion-headed goddesses from Egypt ! For nearly an hour we stood silent before these monstrous antique monoliths, black goddesses of granite, who held our two souls in a deadly clutch, carrying them like bleating lambkins into a darker and more sinister night than could ever have been imagined by the white-capped head of my kinsman, William Cowper. And yet there was something oddly voluptuous about these seven august sisters, with their

protruding muzzles and naked paps, something that seemed to suggest that one's audacity might be rewarded with wyvern embraces of the most subtle kind, had one had the temerity to awaken one of them, to awaken the oldest of them from her sophisticated and protracted slumber, by placing a hand, trembling with a horrid lust, on her fig-shaped knee.

*The
Salvation-
Army Band*

Another celebrated critic whose personality I came to appreciate was Henry McBride. I used to meet him in the rooms of a very dear friend of mine in Washington Square. He would sit in a chair to the left of the fireplace, a chair always reserved for him, and as he took his tea he would delight the company with a flow of amusing observations, which kept skimming over the depths of existence with the same light assurance that a swallow shows as she dips her feathers from time to time in the mirrored surface of a duck-pond.

I had a very curious adventure one afternoon as I was approaching this same friend's rooms along Fourth Street. Shortly after I had left Sixth Avenue, I passed close by a man who was also advancing in the direction of Washington Square. Now it is a habit of mine, engendered, I surmise, by an insatiable, almost morbid curiosity in every stray personality that even remotely enters my sphere of observation, to peer with indecent concentration into the faces of people in the street. The lamps were not yet lighted ; and for this reason, and because a damp, blinding snow was falling, it may have been that I looked into the countenance of this particular stranger with more than usual rudeness. I cannot say. I only know that my eyes encountered a physiognomy that affected me

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in a most startling manner. The tattered great-coat, with little heaps of melting snow peaked up on both shoulders, might have sheltered the walking corpse of some enemy of mine, green from the grave, *who recognised me and whom I recognised*. Never in my life had I seen such evil features as those that looked up at me out of the mist, and yet it seemed to me that I knew them. I hurried forward, trying to assure myself as best I might that the look I had received was accidental, was indeed the customary look of this singular pedestrian. I had only two more blocks to go, but the faster I walked the faster padded the shuffling footsteps of my new acquaintance a few yards behind me. I could hear him talking. Was he talking to himself or to me? The whole demeanour of the man, the shape of his square, stooping shoulders, as I had observed them so indifferently from behind, seemed now horribly characteristic and as recognisable as the figure of one of those criminals one notices in the papers, whose spatulate fingers appear to have doomed them to the gallows from their mother's womb. But I was still uncertain whether, by some wretched chance, I had really managed to direct the venom of this extraordinary being against myself, when I drew near my friend's door. I ran hastily up the tall flight of steps and put my finger on the electric bell, moving aside, meanwhile, into a darkened recess. To my horror, I saw the figure of my pursuer stop short and look up into the shadowed alcove as though to assure himself that I had not yet got into the house. I remained perfectly motionless, but I knew that he saw me; and, sure enough, a moment later, with lowered head, he began advancing up the slippery slabs.

It was one of those moments in life when one's physical nerves acquire the taut intensity of nightmare nerves, and one's mind is driven out like a lost dog beyond the hurdled fold of ordinary commonplace experience. "I'll rip your belly open with a knife," I heard him snarl out at me; but at the same instant, while he was still a few feet away, my fingers, which held the handle of the inner door, felt the first jingle of deliverance. I have always despised these doors that dispense with the services of a porter, that offer one entrance in such a tricky and absurd manner; but that afternoon the teasing rattle was as welcome to me as the dangling end of a rope to a man on the brink of a precipice. I slipped discreetly into safety. When I reached the room above, I told my story; but sitting there with the cozy on the teapot, and Henry McBride in his usual place, I despaired of conveying to the company the peculiar sensations through which I had so recently passed. Some of the guests perhaps in their courtesy to me, did rise and look out of the window. There below us the familiar green buses came swaying through the great arch, and people, *ordinary people*, were walking on the muffled pavement outside. Even to myself my story seemed the most utter folly, and my friends went back to their chairs and resumed their conversation.

Henry McBride was invariably charming to me, but I always felt that his mind, apart from its congenital frivolity, was cognisant and philosophic, was haunted, in fact, by the alarming suspicion that he himself and his room at the Herald Square Hotel, with its shining hot-water pipes, and, indeed, for the matter of

The Verdict of Bridlegoose that, "the great globe it-self" were merely balanced in the unsatisfactory manner of a spinning top that has to fall with a sidelong rush sooner or later, later or sooner.

THE POETS

Few people that I met in America delighted me more than Padraic Colum. In the presence of this man, of this "faëry cardinal," as my brother John once called him, I never failed to feel that particular spiritual elation which authentic poets are able to arouse in the hearts of those of us who value imagination more highly than anything else in the world. I could never set eyes on Mr. Colum without longing to go out into a cornfield to gather for him an armful of red poppies. I would long for an opportunity to do him the simplest service, to draw water out of a well for him, to carry him bowls of fresh cream, or to sit weaving for him a jacket from a new-shorn fleece, white as a cumulus cloud. Sometimes we met on Sixth Avenue, and, in a moment, while listening to his voice, I would forget the iron pilasters that upheld the clattering overhead railway, and be transported to places where toads with crinkled boxing-glove backs hop through long grass, or where the small, warm, western rains drift across the clumped whin-bushes of Ireland. On one occasion he described to me how, as a child, he had seen a begging fiddler leave a workhouse door on a March morning, with a white jackdaw sitting on his shoulder, and told me how wildly he had cried, because he himself, child as he was, wished to be stepping westward with a white bird. He also once related how, as a young boy, he came to write one of his most lovely lyrics, returning late, after a dance in an old farmhouse, to climb over the crooked limbs of a testy

great-uncle, in whose bed he slept, with his head full of his immortal melody. The company of Molly Colum delighted me also. She had a tart personality. If she had been born an Irish dairymaid, one could well imagine the retorts she would have tossed out of the loft-window, as she busied herself with the turning of yesterday's cheeses ; for she had a tongue with a tang.

I recollect watching Mrs. Colum with great appreciation at a dinner-party given by Mrs. Murray Crane. At this same dinner there was a sister of our hostess, whose name I have forgotten, but whose distinction and spiritual poise made the deepest impression on me, made me feel, on leaving the house, as though we had come from breaking bread with some queen saint in ermine. And this sentiment was confirmed by the judgement of Edwin Arlington Robinson, in whose company I travelled back that night to Greenwich Village. Very clearly in my memory is fixed the picture of this stately man, with his "mortis'd and tenon'd" reserve. Upon my soul, I never saw a poet so gifted who appeared less like a poet. His friend Ridgely Torrence used always to look to me as if he had just emerged from a grove on Mount Parnassus, his head crowned with a wreath of white bryony, while Mr. Robinson presented a front to the world suggestive of an uncommunicative gentleman of private means, who liked nothing so much as to sit down before a bright fire and read the *Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*, published by Doubleday, Page and Company.

Of all the poets I know, I think Richard Le Gallienne looks most like a poet. When *Ebony and Ivory* came out, I sent him a copy ; and I shall

never forget the thrill of pleasure it gave me when he came to tea at Patchin Place, carrying the book in his hand for me to inscribe. For Richard Le Gallienne always represented to my mind the last of the great figures of the Nineties ; and, in truth, because of a certain look of fatality he wore over his shoulders, like Cæsar's cloak, one was constantly being reminded that one was talking with a man who had sat at meat with Swinburne, with Dowson, with Lionel Johnson, and with Oscar Wilde. In later days I used to walk with him in the Catskill Mountains, and have seen him many times come toward me with his jacket on his arm, light of step as any fisher-boy ; but even then I never lost the impression, though we might be happy for long hours together, that in some curious way he was set apart, that he was hearing, from the hollow chasms of the great stone-quarries he loved, a voice I could not hear, seeing through the slim trunks of the silver birches which rose out of the bracken a form that I could not see.

Very different were the meditations roused in me by a glimpse I got of Bertrand Russell, that magnanimous philosopher, who had the air of some funny, eccentric eme of a noble family, who, once a day, at tea-time, would leave his turreted library to come down into the great hall to take a slice of thin bread and butter with the assembled house-party. He had been asked to dinner at Patchin Place ; and because the green peas were still cooking on the gas-stove, and the chicken ordered from the little French shop next door to Bigelow's had not yet arrived when his taxicab entered the alley, I was instructed to entertain him for a few moments in the room downstairs. I think he resented the

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delay, fearing no doubt that he would be late in arriving at some lecture he was giving that night ; for, to my extreme embarrassment, I saw him at one moment pull out his watch, a movement that made me beyond words eager that he should be set down, forthwith, before the young roasted capon, which, with my left eye, I now saw pass the window. In appearance Bertrand Russell resembled Sir Spencer Ponsonby, while his voice put me in mind of the tired voice of my cousin Ralph Shirley. I asked him whether he did not consider the existence of America, with its successful materialism and its stereotyped mob-thought, the greatest menace to civilisation that the world had yet seen. He replied that although it quite conceivably might become a menace to our old-world conception of civilisation, he thought there might emerge from it, eventually, a new kind of civilisation, a civilisation perhaps capable of producing a greater amount of happiness for the human race than our antiquated European values had ever done. He spoke, however, with diffidence, and when I asked him about the form that such civilisation would take, he said he was unable to tell, but suggested that I might look upon the invention of the down-town skyscraper as a kind of symbol or token of the future.

THE PUBLISHERS

It was about this time that Mr. Symon Gould, of the American Library Service, suddenly announced to me that he intended to sell the rights of my books to some other publisher. *Black Laughter* had been planned, but not yet written ; so I had before me the difficult task of persuading some one or other to back me to the tune of satisfying the uncertain claims of the American Library Service. My thoughts went at once to Mr. Alfred A. Knopf, who I knew was interested in the work of my brother, T. F. Powys.

I set out for his office. I had never quite got over my nervous dread of New York business buildings, and for this reason I omitted to consult the porter about the number of the floor I sought, but instead stepped briskly into a waiting elevator, trying to represent myself as best I could as a man who knew his business, by God, and had no time to waste. Immediately the door closed with a snap, and I found myself being carried aloft, my belly tingling as though my diaphragm had become suddenly porous to the winds of heaven. I asked the boy to let me out at Mr. Knopf's office. To my surprise and discomfiture he told me he did not know what floor it was on. I looked round the cage, in the hope of getting some help, for I knew everybody must have heard my question. It was now that my eye for the first time lit on an individual who seemed curiously to resemble Mr. Knopf as I remembered him, a dark, handsome man, who had the discreet, downcast eye and glossy

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look of an important Oriental official, who, after having witnessed the execution of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, on a gallows fifty cubits high, was, in marabou-feathered sandals, hastening to present the King and Esther with a bouquet of Sharon roses. I was certain it was Mr. Knopf; but, when this same man quietly stepped out at the sixteenth floor without as much as a word or look, I was again not certain. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to be carried up to the twentieth floor, and from there down again to the ground floor, where, if the worst came to the worst, it would be necessary for me to consult one of those alarming alphabetical boards, merely to stand in front of which has invariably caused me in self-conscious embarrassment to forget my a-b-c's. When, finally, I stepped out at the sixteenth floor, and saw, seated in the sanctum of a spacious office, my companion of the elevator, and realised that in very truth I had been flouted by the great publisher himself, it required all the presumption of my exaggerated self-confidence to support me in presenting my cause to his clever and beautiful lady. I don't suppose I shall ever be able to obliterate from the tablets of my memory the peculiar sense of ignominy—perhaps entirely without cause or justification—I experienced as I descended that day down, down, down, as if under the very heels, soft as shammy leather, of this powerful business man, who so obviously wished to dissociate himself from me and my affairs.

During my stay in New York, I used greatly to enjoy working at the Public Library. On many a bright frosty morning have I turned into Fifth Avenue, trembling with a kind of secret exultation

as I looked up at the narrow, Cubistic piles on each side of the famous thoroughfare, sharp-edged and gleaming in the early morning sunshine. Away I would walk, past the butterfly shop with the clouded yellow in the window, past Brentano's, till I found myself on the paved front of the great building under that absurd statue representing an insipid girl uneasily seated on a squatting horse, with the words, "Beauty old but ever new, Eternal Voice and Inward Word," writ above her head—words that to the intelligence of any honest salesman of roasted chestnuts mean nothing at all, and might be taken, in fact, as a typical expression of that windy, high flying idealism which does so much harm in this world. How exhilarating it used to be to enter the reference-room of the great building, and to sit there reading the works of some old English worthy, surrounded by an accidental assemblage of men and women, boys and girls, who, with preoccupied, silent attention, were assimilating small scraps of wisdom from the books stored away with such care and method in the surrounding shelves!

On fine afternoons I would sometimes visit the Zoological Gardens in the Bronx. I used to like to come down the high stairs of the elevated railway, to pass the peanut men with their steaming kettles, and finally to go through the turnstile on the other side of the white gateway, and so to walk along an asphalt path till I came to where the bison were kept. Here were preserved the last remnants of those great herds that not so very long ago had wandered supreme, with wind-combed shoulders, over the prairies, herds decimated by a race of terrifying mammals who, for the amusement of their children, preserved a handful of them alive in

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a tiny wired-in enclosure denuded of everything but their own dung and a few bundles of hay. But, by God, in this world it does not do to have too delicate a morality, and I was well pleased to see the lions and the leopards trotting up and down behind good sound bars. Had not I often enough trembled at hearing their voices, as with flaunting tread and eyes of flame they crossed from one escarpment to another, ignorant that at last their hour also had struck, and that they were about to be stamped out of existence like so many obnoxious vermin? In this world it is necessary to cultivate, to acquire, a tough attitude that knows nought of fanciful misgivings. I used to look at Silver King, the polar bear presented to the gardens by Paul J. Rainey, and envy the famous hunter his freedom from the kind of imaginative sympathy that would have made him feel upon his conscience, by day and by night, the restless, troubled movements of the great animal, up and down, up and down, which for his own personal amusement he had doomed to perpetual imprisonment.

Once, I remember, as I approached the aviary, I met Mr. Jerome Blum, the artist. He had been inspecting the crocodiles, those curious reptiles who spend their captivity immobile as stones, and yet have that in their eye suggestive of a sly knowledge that they and their kind will have little or no difficulty in outliving the terrible régime of man. In spite of his grotesque appearance I always felt that Jerry Blum possessed in him something sublime, just as a toad carries a diamond in its head. I had stayed with him for a week once, in his house at Mount Kisco, and I shall never forget how inspired his extraordinary features looked, hideous

as the features of a buck-baboon Cézanne, as he *The*
sat opposite me painting my portrait under an *Publishers*
apple-tree. There was a bathing-pool at the
bottom of the orchard ; and at midday we would
run down to it, and I would sit on the bank amongst
the long grasses and dragon-flies, watching the
heavy shoulders of my friend protrude from the
water, till his uncouth flounderings would disturb
from the rushes a bittern that would rise into the
air and float away over the old mill, over the distant
woods.

It was always a relief to me to enter the bird-house in the Bronx. Perhaps Leopardi is right, and birds are the only creatures upon the earth who are really happy, their superficial frivolity seeming to be exactly adapted to something heartless, shifty, and unprincipled at the back of life. I certainly used to feel this most strongly when, upon pushing open the doors, my ears would be assailed by the shrill, high-pitched, insistent screams of these extraordinary vertebrates that have learnt to raise themselves from the ground with the amazing buoyancy of moths and butterflies. Yet how lovely to see the bird of paradise display itself to its paramour, quivering with outstretched wings, as though even in a sandy-floored cage it could catch the exact vibration of the music of the spheres !

I used also to like to visit Prospect Park in Brooklyn. It was pleasant to walk across wide stretches of soft grass, with a distant background of green trees. Sometimes I would find my way into the Quaker graveyard and sit down amongst the unassuming tombstones of these good people, with my heart full of love and my head full of gentle thoughts. And there came an occasion when I

certainly was in need of such benign influences. It happened one day that I saw walking in front of me two children, a girl of fifteen and another much younger. The elder of the two children, a beautiful creature with long whip-cords of golden hair hanging down her back, was evidently bullying her friend. She was holding her tightly by her wrist, but I could not hear what she was saying. As I passed, she shot a glance at me over the head of her victim, a glance inquiring, subtle, full of meaning, as though she wanted me to understand what was going on, and felt confident that she had only to look at me *in a certain way* for me to become forthwith a tacit accomplice in her ill-behaviour, ill-behaviour from which she was obviously deriving an intense neurotic excitement. Although I am by nature extremely indulgent to all sexual irregularities, and indeed consider such tolerance essential to the graces of a civilised gentleman, I have sometimes allowed myself to entertain misgivings as to the propriety of what is known to the world as sadism. What, I have asked myself, is this unregenerate emotion doing in our Christian era, this emotion that takes so wild and unreflective a delight in stripes and tears? Now, when this attractive little monster, with hair like golden whip-cords hanging down to the small of her back, looked at me in this odd way on the great lawn of Brooklyn's park, my heart leapt up in eager reciprocity, and I simply could not show any disapproval, no, not even when, dragging her small companion on to the grass, she began, with a cold, ambiguous smile, to smack her bare legs. I looked at her, just as in Africa I had looked at a naked boy and girl torturing a white-breasted hawk, and then fled

away. Had not I been stung by a poisoned snake, with marvellous Picasso-like markings on its back, and was it not imperative for me just then to reach the artificial lake, nay, to sail over its glassy surface, in a flat-bottomed boat designed to look like a swan ?

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Sometimes, with my sister Philippa, I would walk eastward along Tenth Street, till we came to the river, and there, on a bleak wharf, with the gas-works behind us making periodical explosions, we would sit for hours together looking over the grey waters of the East River. After the streets through which we had just been walking, streets swarming with life like the under side of a stone, it was wonderful from so secure and deserted a position to look out at gulls and sailboats and free, ocean-travelling ships. For how indescribable these streets that lay behind us were, noisy, crowded streets, with coster-carts along each curb, coster-carts from the sides of which strange, raggle-taggle, gypsy-like Jews, Jews who combined the fury of so many Jeremiahs with the craft of so many turbaned Jacobs, were intent upon selling their wares, upon selling coloured garments, or coloured fruit, or chunks of pickled watermelon of a faint-green hue, which tainted the air of the sidewalk with a taint bitter, astringent, aromatic, as the smell of the streets of Aleppo ! Here indeed was life, strident and unappeasable ! I saw one lusty fellow, with a great buggerly black beard and a roving bull's eye, hold up a live eel. He kept tapping it on its head to make it open its mouth, crying out all the time, "He alive, he fresh, he alive, he fresh !" Good Lord, what a clatter and hubbub and turmoil these streets manifested ! What pestilence, or dire

visitation, or dire exploitation, could reduce the spring and rebound of such eel-eaters? I saw in an undertaker's window a child's coffin, padded with white satin, a little dusty at the edges; but well I knew that for every patient, waxen image carried away in such a receptacle, there would be at least three others to take its place. For on every step and stairway, and at every window, there were mothers, with whey-white mammæ, suckling their young.

That winter the famous prophet and magician, Gurdjieff, appeared in New York, accompanied by Mr. Orage, who was acting for him like a kind of Saint Paul. My sister had been interested by what she had heard of the Institute at Fontainebleau, and also by what she now saw of the performances of the pupils. She persuaded us one evening to go to the Neighbourhood Playhouse to see them. On this night I had an opportunity of observing Gurdjieff while he stood smoking not far from me in the vestibule. He had a high, bald head, with sharp, black eyes. His general appearance made one think of a riding-master, though there was something about his presence that affected one's nerves in a strange way. Especially did one feel this when his pupils came on to the stage, to perform like a hutchful of hypnotised rabbits under the gaze of a master conjuror.

Orage came to tea at Patchin Place one afternoon, and discoursed very lucidly and very wisely upon many obscure matters that had to do with the theories of the new cult. But I felt that nothing he could say could make me believe, so rooted were my two feet, even to my own satisfaction, in the heavy soil of the flower-growing, dung-strewn earth which

knows nought of ghosts. Yet I could not fail to be impressed by the conclusions come to by this most brilliant philosopher, whose mind is so vehemently set upon rejecting any black-handed behaviourist theory of life, a philosopher looking like a boy in Dr. Arnold's Sixth Form at Rugby who had found, beyond all expectation, a rare, white-plumed pigeon in his ink-stained desk.

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THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

IT was in the spring of 1924 that I was invited by Dr. James S. Watson, of *The Dial*, to join him on an expedition into the Rocky Mountains. This man had always delighted me. It used to amuse me to watch him drifting through life with the unresisting adaptability of a long, drooping straw caught in the current of a lively trout-stream. He was enormously rich, and yet liked to appear poor. He was extremely wise, yet preferred to be thought foolish. With a small black bag, held in the long, sensitive fingers of an artist, he was to be encountered on a perpetual drooping peregrination through the side-streets of Greenwich Village. He made one think of those silent, evasive eels one hears about, eels that find their way to the ocean from remote ponds, sliding their sinuous bodies through night-dusky, dew-drenched pastures. He possessed a subtle, cynical mind, which he did all in his power to conceal. He was an extremely able doctor, who never practised, an extremely clever writer, who never wrote. Whether one met him in the French pastry-shop, or in the hall of his house, with its mullioned window and noble stone chimney-piece, he ever remained aloof and uncommitted. Even the gracious presence of his resplendent lady at the end of a lighted dinner-table was never sufficient to overcome his embarrassed diffidence, a diffidence that seemed to cover the most inconvenient reticences. In truth, as he knocked off the grey ashes of his cigarette, between the courses, on to the rim of the silver candlestick opposite the place where he sat,

he was capable of interjecting some whispered comment that would completely destroy one's confidence and would keep recurring to one's mind for days afterwards, because of its teasing ambiguity.

The Rocky Mountains

To see Dr. Watson and Mr. Scofield Thayer together was something to remember. It would have required a Henry James to tabulate and record each interesting tarot card of this astounding association. And yet these two millionaires, in the face of the crass stupidity of the Philistine world, in the face of the sneering hostility of a score of pseudo-literary cliques, have managed to produce in America a journal which, without any doubt, is the most distinguished of its kind to appear in the English language since the publication of the *Yellow Book*. But how quaint it was to see these two working together for the æsthetic enlightenment of the Western world ! It was like seeing a proud, self-willed, bull-calf bison, fed on nothing but golden oats, yoked to the plough with a dainty, fetlocked, dapple-grey unicorn, who would, an' he could, step delicately over the traces and scamper to the edge of the prairie, where, under the protective colouring of a grove of pale wattle trees, he might be lost to the view of the world.

The taste of Scofield Thayer was the austere aristocratic taste of a Roman noble, of a Roman connoisseur, who has filled his marble hall with the work of his Greek slaves ; while the Doctor's taste was that of a super-subtle Nicodemus who had a mania for collecting at night, by proxy, images of unknown gods, put together by indigent artists whose lack of rice was never for long out of the mind of this generous young man.

The Verdict of Bridlegoose A rare happiness it was for me to find myself once again heading for the wilderness, with a stout pony under me, and half a dozen crafty, long-eared mules following, one behind the other, between the dark resin-smelling tree trunks. The first day, we rode thirty-five miles and camped in an open place a few hundred yards from the banks of a mountain lake. I was tired and lay down to sleep early. Just before dawn broke, I was waked by the howl of a timber-wolf. He uttered a single yell ; and the lone cry had scarcely died down, when a dozen elk, with cowslip-coloured buttocks, came cantering through the ghostly white light. As the sun rose I was walking by the edge of the lake. I shall not soon forget its beauty, with its two sections lying there like the gleaming, outstretched wings of an enormous purple butterfly. In appearance and shape the lake was not unlike Lake Elmenteita, and I found myself instinctively scanning its surface for the head of a hippopotamus. Across the sky, against an outline of snow-capped mountains, flew three white pelicans, their pouched beaks giving them a gross look, very different from that of the flamingoes I used to disturb at such an hour in Africa, with their rose-red wings and serpentine necks.

The Doctor left camp early on his quest for grizzly bears, while I, half an hour later, taking a rough stick in my hand, set out by myself. For some time I kept close to a river-bank. There were a great many willows growing there, but it was easy to push one's way through them. Suddenly I realised that some large animal was moving along on the other side of the stream. I sank down and waited. The creature was evidently working up

my way. On it came, till, looking though the screen of narrow leaves, I could see a bull moose, with a cow behind him. If I had not seen their heads I would have taken them for rhinos, so massive and dun-coloured did their flanks look, as they slowly advanced, browsing upon the fresh twigs. Presently the bull stepped into the moving water. I thought at first that he was going to head straight for my hiding-place ; however, to my no small relief he selected, for his landing, a spot some twenty yards further up-stream. He looked very imposing as he stood in the middle of the noisy water, with his head half turned to see if his cow was following. I saw him lift his tail, letting his dung fall splashing into the water with the extraordinary aplomb of a large grass-eater who is untroubled and undisturbed. He looked to me about the size of a bull eland, though perhaps not quite so tall. The spread of his horns in the bright sunshine was wonderful, but what a weight for the animal's great head to support—for that huge, ungainly head, with its prehensile upper lip.

I was back in camp by the evening. The trapper we had with us was a small, wiry man, who had been living in these mountains for years. He had the wary, wizened look of a marten which has been caught half a dozen times, and half a dozen times got itself free. It was interesting to watch his face. It remained dull and unresponsive in ordinary conversation ; but the moment his senses were assailed, its expression changed to one of intense alertness. Again and again I saw him stand motionless, snuffing the air long before the rank smell of elk was apparent to us ; and I have seen him stop, with ears pricked, when he alone was able to hear a bear

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of Bridlegoose* at work on a piece of ant-infested timber half a mile away.

The next morning I again set out alone. It seemed to grow hot, with an almost tropical heat; and coming to a stream in the forest, I took off my clothes and slipped into a pool. I felt as naked and unprotected under those great silent pine trees as I had felt naked and unprotected in Africa, when I bathed in a certain hot spring overshadowed with leaves large as the ears of elephants. And not ten yards away I saw my first track of a grizzly bear, tracks far larger than those of a lion, more like the footprints of a man, only with claws instead of toes. I was glad enough to leave the dangerous place.

On my way back I came upon some beaver-dams in the flat near the river. I examined them closely. They were so solidly constructed that I was able to walk across them, though there was deep water on both sides. I put up a wild grey goose that went sailing away over the stone expanses, over the heaps of white skeleton-like timber which the snow-floods had left stranded. I was fascinated to see how the beavers had contrived to bring trees down from a quaking-asp grove by means of a canal they had dug. I looked with awe at the marks of their webbed feet in the soft mud, the footprints of a warm-coated people possessing the ingenuity of goblins!

After some days we reached the Great Divide. Here was a river which separated itself into two halves, the waters of the one half being destined to reach the Atlantic Ocean, while the waters of the other would eventually flow into the Pacific. I knelt at its fork, and with my right hand drank from the one, and with my left hand drank from the other. There were so many trout that it was

possible to beat them on to the banks with sticks, *The Rocky Mountains* and we spent an hour at this merry pastime. I tell you it was something to see our trapper Jones slit them up, ready for our supper ! Their entrails he let fall on the dry, round pebble-stones at his feet ; and Watson pointed out to me that their hearts still continued to flutter, even as filthy offal. I picked up a heart, a small, pink, quivering morsel of flesh, that refused to die. It was like a baby skate.

When we next moved, we rode over the flat top of a mountain which reminded me of that part of the Aberdare range in East Africa where the elephant-trails cross between the Milowa and Sugeroi Rivers. Coming down from the mountain we saw a brown bear. A little further on I caught sight of a porcupine absorbed in its own secret pursuits, and yet cognisant of our presence. What an infinite complacence its concentrated attitude seemed to suggest ! And yet it is ordained that even a porcupine's composure is sometimes ruffled, as, for instance, when a bear turns it over on its back and gravely begins to rip open its unprotected, bark-filled, grass-filled stomach. The next morning I walked down a creek, and then along the foot of a mountain. I came upon a great deal of sage-brush. I kept picking it as I walked and crushing it in my fingers. How the plant, with its gnarled lavender-like growth, its dry odour, health-giving and aromatic, must appeal to people born in the west of America, so redolent it seems of the dust, and prairie-dogs, and hot stones, and perpetual sunshine of their open plains !

I walked under a cliff clustered over with the nests of mountain swallows, which projected from the rock like so many Kikuyu gourds. Many of the

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nests were built so low that I found it possible to look down their funnels to where the small feathered mothers were sitting with sharp eyes full of apprehension. Meanwhile, a hundred screaming male birds flew backwards and forwards about my ears, a veritable hail-storm of darting arrowheads. In the Rocky Mountains I was always impressed by the chatter and noise made by small creatures, the tiniest squirrel taking upon itself to shout after me. In Africa they would have soon learned better, would soon have learned that to make the world aware of one's presence is a privilege belonging to the carnivore, and not to little, thrifty nut-collectors. One day I climbed to the top of a mountain. I sat on a rocky ledge on its very summit, overlooking a wide, tree-grown valley. A thousand feet below me, and yet far enough above the tops of the trees, two eagles swept backwards and forwards in wild pursuit of each other. Aha ! What a love-making was that ! I began to retrace my steps ; and there, right in the open, near a snow-drift, I came upon a bitch badger with three young ones. I tried to get close to her, but she faced me down with many false advances and ugly growls. The little badgers were round and very fat, and were covered with fur of a reddish colour. I came down the southern side of the mountain. For half an hour I rested under a jack-pine at the top of a sloping shell-rock precipice. A moose-bird came and mocked at me ; and a chipmunk, with tail erect, eyed me suspiciously, squatting upon its hind legs like a miniature kangaroo. These cloudy coloured streams above the timber-line, caused by the melting snow, are not much to drink at ; and I was glad enough to come upon a spring of pure water,

which spouted out of the side of the hill. I knelt down and drank at the earth itself, as though I had my lips to the udder of a monstrous, sweet-smelling round-bellied dairy cow. The spring presently became a brown stream, which ran rippling through a grassy glade, green as the back of a green parrot. I lay down to rest, leaning over to look at the bottom of a clear pool, to look at the incredible activity taking place in its loose mud. Caddis-worms crept from mound to mound; and strange centipedes, with earwig tails, paraded over the shining subaqueous pebbles. I watched them as if I were looking into an aquarium. What did these creatures, with their remote, intense, intimate life, know about eagle love-making, or about bitch badgers, or about the moose that had dropped its flat horn not far from where I lay, a horn already nibbled out of shape by a porcupine? As I walked through these slippery pine-forests, I continually met with hot puffs of wind, pungent with the incense that rose from the sun-dried needle floor. But on the high lawns, where the lupin bloomed, the air was perfumed with the scent of flowers. If I shut my eyes, it was as though I were loitering in the kitchen-garden at home, between rows of divers-hued sweet peas. And how silent these uplands were, when the wind was still! Surely, if one had listened, one could have heard each tiny petal fall, could have heard the fanning of the butterflies' wings, as they flickered from one sweet-smelling blossom to another through the pollen-laden air.

One day I got to the top of the highest of all the mountains. Far above me I would see a waterfall sparkling in the sunshine, but when I reached it,

there would be others still further up. Once on its summit, I followed along its razor edge, marvelling at the depths of the canyons that fell away on both sides.

The idea came to me that it might be possible to find another way down ; and presently, looking over a banked-up snow drift, I fancied that if I followed the course of a stream which, from where I was standing, showed like a thin strand of silver wire twisting between the rocks, I should have small difficulty in reaching the timber-line, whose slopes seemed to fall away in easy gradations to the valley below.

Down I went, down over loose rocks, down over mud-slides, down through ridges of melting snow, till I reached the stream I had observed. Below one of its waterfalls I came to a hidden, mossy bank, where heather grew. So enchanted was I by the lovely seclusion of the spot that I lay down and rested for a few moments. Presently the sky became overcast, and a distant growl of thunder reminded that I had better be starting once more on my descent. With considerable difficulty I slid from projecting rock to projecting rock, until I came to a place where the stream, gathering itself into one swift, deep channel, disappeared round the slippery, blackened base of an enormous boulder. Obviously I must climb over this obstruction. I clambered up its side and found myself looking into the empty cleft of a shocking precipice ! Fearful lest my very movements might topple the boulder down into the void gulf, I slid back. On every side ugly bastions beetled above me. The mountain had become darkened. Black clouds, ragged as the wings of misshapen ravens,

were racing across the firmament, clouds that *The Rocky Mountains* looked as if they had been torn and fractured by too close contact with the wild landscape over which they were drifting. Crouched behind the granite block, with the water racing past my boots toward the treacherous crevice. I became terrified. My kneebones shook. Above me, ledge above ledge, the mountain towered. The least movement I made seemed fraught with danger.

Then, just as when I had been caught by fire in a tropical forest, a deep animal instinct of self-preservation became fully awake. Step by step, I climbed back by the way I had come, up over the slide, up past where the heather grew, up over the ledge by means of a fallen tree, up over the shell-rock where the woodchuck had called to me. Often I was compelled to rest for want of breath, but I would soon be on my feet again, climbing higher and higher, with the persistent deliberation of a bear who knows that a trapper without pity is after him. And now the great forest trees on the slopes of the mountain had become suddenly articulate. Exhausted, and soaked to the skin, I passed between their stark trunks, nervous, impotent, while far above me they moaned to each other, as their stiff arms bent and swayed in the rushing gale.

When I woke the next morning I looked out on to rain-drenched mountains that smelt like Africa in the rainy season. Through the open door of my tent I could see a porcupine feeding, drawing into its mouth great, wet leaves with its right paw.

The next week we moved into even wilder country. On all sides of our camp, jagged crags projected into the sky, their shoulders cusped with snow, their broad backs covered with shell-rock.

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At the timber-line there were a few scattered groups of fir trees, which used to appear to me, as I rode in the valley below, like cloaked women, like desperate female fugitives in tattered green capes, who, in an evil hour, had been caught on the bare hillside, as they fled from some unprecedented disaster, to be petrified for ever, with drooping shoulders and bowed heads. How many black, merciless blizzards must it not have required to bend this timber into such uniform dejection ! Once more I scaled a mountain-side ; and as, from the summit, I scanned the wild prospect of the Rocky Mountains, I felt rise within me a pæan of triumph at seeing stretched out in every direction before my eyes this great ridged backbone of the world, which, sharp as the spine of a shark, each twenty-four hours in the diurnal revolution saws its way through the planet's circumambient atmosphere.

One night I sat for long hours over our camp-fire, the outlines of the distant mountains standing out clearly against the night sky, the trees that edged their slopes appearing like a growth of beard on a dead giant's chin. The red flames danced and the smoke drifted off into the surrounding darkness. I gazed at the glowing core of a burning pine-stump and tried to imprint the scene upon my memory. How emphatic and incontestable it all looked ! The lively, scarlet flames, the white snow, the encircling shadows ! When I, at length, lay down in my blankets, I had a very curious dream. I dreamed that, as I was showing my brother Willie this country, we suddenly passed through a small door, and found ourselves back in the top orchard of our home in Somerset. My brother scanned the familiar fruit-trees in interested silence, the golden

pippin, the russet by the terrace gate. He noticed the fresh gaps in their rows. I did my best to reassure him, though well I knew that time had done its work. Then it was that, while in my dream my heart sank with unutterable dismay at this new evidence of life's fatal instability, a long, low howl went moaning under the aged apple-trees, moaning across the lawns of the garden, moaning over the chimneys of the old house. It was a most singular howling, a howling such as one might fancy issuing from the contracted throat of a shackled god. It rang through my ears. Surely it could be no illusion. I sprang up from the ground wide awake. A coyote was making the creek echo with its barking, somewhere out in the darkness, beyond the smouldering fire. For nearly half an hour I lay listening to its dolorous voice.

Our last night in the mountains arrived. We were camped in a meadow-like valley by the side of a mountain river. The moon was full, I could not sleep. Slowly she moved from behind the mountains across the sky. Hour after hour followed, and still the austere beauty of that midnight scene arrested my consciousness. There, far above the chill, black, ossified mountains, above the motionless spears of the pine-trees, paraded the passionless, treacherous, immortal planet. And as I lay with my head resting on the meadow lupin, already cool with night-dew, I became aware at last of the consolation that is to be drawn from silent communion with matter, with Eternal Matter, bereft of divine innuendoes, but capable still of sustaining, after its sublime manner, the fearful and wavering soul of man. In the small hours of the night I rose up from where I lay, and with a blanket over my

shoulder wandered along the river's shelving bank. To my left, in the centre of the drenched white pasture, I could see the dark shadow of the tethered mule, of the mule we called Ben, standing with ears forward, silently alert to all my movements while before me, between the charmed forest trees, lay the silver highway of the river, as magical and uncertain as life itself.

FOLLOWED AND FOLLOWED AFTER

ONCE out of the mountains, it was with ravenous hunger that I ate my first salad at a wayside house. I devoured lettuces and radishes and spring onions with the same savage, unthinking ferocity that I have seen displayed by humpbacked cattle in Africa, when after months of being deprived of salt they would rush down to the "lick" on the shore of the lake. For now that the strenuous expedition was over, I began to feel certain misgivings lest I had given my insistent pursuer a chance of overtaking me. As I sat, with hooked knee, in the small, sun-baked, grassless yard, twenty miles from Cody, I became more than ever convinced that the bacilli put to sleep by Abrams' magic had come awake again. By the time that we had arrived at Buffalo Bill's famous hostel, I was certain of it. I remember lying in a little upstairs bedroom, haunted by evil premonitions, while, at intervals, through the open window would come floating in the voices of two young men who were emptying garbage. The stairway outside my chamber was adorned with innumerable oil-paintings of the gallant rough-rider, representing him as the central figure of a hundred adventures; Buffalo Bill engaged in a bloody battle with Indians, Buffalo Bill casting a lasso over the horns of a galloping steer, Buffalo Bill in a lonely, snow-covered glade standing over an elk. I could not but envy the fellow his lanate imperial beard, his brave demeanour, and his sound reins.

In the evening I walked as far as the equestrian

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statue of him, which, executed by Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, now stands in a hot plain above the Shoshone River. I tapped one of the raised hoofs of the horse, and it gave back a tinkling, hollow sound. Meanwhile, the sun dropped beneath the rim of the distant mountains, transmuting the sagebrush into an enveloping Aztec chasuble of flashing phoenix feathers.

I reached New York on a Sunday evening. Never did I love the city so well. As my train drew across the Jersey flats, I felt the deepest possible allegiance to this metropolis of concrete and steel and glittering glass, refractive and indurate as a cleft diamond set in silver. It had been a hot day, and the streets wore that silent, deserted appearance which is characteristic of them on Sundays, when for a few hours the city's eager population pauses from its work, some to dip tired limbs in the sea, some, with knapsacks on their shoulders, to explore the recesses of the Palisades, some to loll out of high tenement windows, and others to sport together in closed, semi-dark chambers.

The day after my arrival, I accompanied my brother John to Garden City, to visit the publishing-house of Doubleday, Page and Company, in connection with his new novel, *Ducdame*. I had grown a great red beard in Wyoming, and I dare say I presented to the passer-by a sufficiently rough appearance. When we reached the Pennsylvania Station we found we had an hour to wait, and we therefore began wandering along the street in the direction of Ninth Avenue. Presently we came opposite a high brick wall, surrounding, so we surmised, a garden belonging to some Catholic

institution. Beset as we were by the clang and clatter of the city, we both found something peculiarly pleasing about this quiet, unobtrusive brick wall, which hid, we hardly doubted, flower-beds of gold-dusted snapdragons and cool-budding dahlias. While looking at it I became conscious of a sudden weariness, and sank down where I was, on the edge of the curb. There was nothing in this action of mine to alarm or surprise my brother, and without a word he went over to a green receptacle for papers, and selecting the cleanest he could find, brought it back for me to sit upon. He then proceeded to walk up and down the street like a sentry; his black, forked figure "in its dark cloud making its moan."

The midsummer sunshine poured down upon me, and upon the convent wall, and upon the gleaming brass hames of the dray-horses which kept rattling past. All at once, as I sat there, with my elbows resting on my knees, I became aware of a woman standing before me. I looked up, and at the same moment she handed me a coin that had upon it the delicate impress of a bison. For a fraction of a second I hesitated, and then I blessed her, blessed her as any real beggar might have blessed this unknown human being, who had manifested in so contrite a way the pity she felt for mortal suffering. And as I put the small coin in my trousers pocket, and watched my benefactress turn the corner where my brother was standing with folded arms, I felt for once completely reconciled to the human race, which with all its selfishness and crude avarice is capable of producing, now and again, here and there, sometimes amongst the rich, sometimes amongst the poor, certain choice and magnanimous

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spirits, whose charity falls upon the heads of the undeserving with the softness of spring rain.

It was, I think, the day after this incident that I had occasion to visit my savings bank, at the corner of Fourteenth Street. In the time of my extreme poverty, I had selected this building as a suitable place for storing the few dollars I had in my possession. Often and often have I sat on its cheap bench, waiting for my name to be called through the iron meshes of the teller's window, indolently watching the pigeons as they fluttered from one Corinthian column to another on the further side of a dusty skylight, built to admit shafts of gold from a far distant sun, shafts of gold which would illuminate, like monks' folios, the enormous ledgers over which the young clerks bent their heads. And upon these occasions it was as though I had been privileged to pry into the squeaking, grinding, ill-fitted machinery that keeps the present system of society going, a machinery, surely, far less cleverly designed than the sidereal clock, invented by the Glastonbury monk, Peter Lightfoot, in 1320, which, with wheel and cog intact, still marks out the passing of minutes, months, and years, for the happy burghers of Wimborne Minster, in the ancient county of Dorset. I would review the long lines of patrons as they presented their soiled books, some to put money in, some to take money out. What curious expressions one saw on the faces of these human beings, on the lined, harassed faces of these men who had forgotten how to hunt, or to fish, or to grow corn, or to catch wild fowl, but who depended for a livelihood on procuring grubby scraps of paper, embellished with the countenances of clean-shaven or bearded Presidents

long since dead ! How the hands of the poor wretches would tremble and shake, as though with an ague, as they gathered up their money, too intimidated even to count it under the supercilious scrutiny of the petty recorders, who proudly took the part of pale-faced puppet judges in the degrading struggle.

That day, as I left the building and was crossing the street, in front of Uncle Ben's pawn-shop, I felt a sudden sharp stabbing pain under my right shoulder. It was the kind of pain that demands attention, that cannot be ignored, and when I reached Patchin Place, I found that I had a high fever. I left New York for the country that very afternoon. I suppose the journey into Connecticut had been nearly half completed when I realised by a certain familiar impediment in my breathing that I was going to have a hæmorrhage. I sat as still as I could, "freezing." It availed me nothing. Every few seconds I could feel my lungs filling with blood ; and to breathe at all it was necessary for me to cough little, short, choking coughs. I kept my head turned toward the window, and as best I could hid my face behind my hands. Slowly the pleasant, grey-walled Connecticut fields slid past my vision, already heavy with milkweed and goldenrod. The mere suspicion that I was really *this time* going to die put me into a state of deepest misery. I could not bear that my hour should be yet. I yearned for life as a dace with a barbed hook in its gullet yearns to be switching a free tail under Pye Bridge, upstream, with its companions.

All that night, as I lay on my back on a wide balcony, this same obsession was upon me. I could in no way accommodate my mind to the conception

*Followed
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After*

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of Bridlegoose* of Death. Let it be for others, but not for me.
“ My life, O Lord Jupiter, only my life ! ”

For close on two months I rested where I was, and slowly, very slowly, felt my vigour return to me. Then I grew strong enough to walk in the garden, fragrant with ripening purple grapes, grew strong enough to observe the movements of a spider, who, with delicate, precise hands, was suspending his symmetrical web between a coxcomb and a nasturtium leaf ; grew strong enough to raise my head and pass the time of day with a young woman who was looking out of a window, and whose face, half hidden by a stooping sunflower, was pale as a rain-washed autumn mushroom, for no better reason than that she had a cancer and was to be dead and buried before the first fall of snow.

MONTOMA

WITH my consumption once more upon me, it seemed the utmost folly to resume my life in New York City; and now that my actual struggle for bread and meat had been relieved, I decided to spend the winter with my companion in the Catskill Mountains.

We rented a small farmhouse, situated on the top of a winding mountain road. We moved in at the time when it was impossible to walk at night down a lane without being deafened by the shrill cacophony of katydids. With their green wings concealed behind the green leaves of the hedgerow trees, these singular insects made music to one another. As we stumbled over dry, dead sumach-sticks—sticks that we were to collect later on for firewood—as we brushed with our ankles tufts of scented fern, on our way to this or that deserted quarry, we would feel like clumsy intruders, blundering in upon some incomprehensible symphony of tireless musicians, who, with twittering elbows, performed night after night, on beetle-gut fiddles, before silent rows of invisible critics, of astute, infinitesimal Paul Rosenfelds, comfortably ensconced somewhere or other, quite close to us, under the vaulted mountain sky.

Then came the first fall of snow, and for months the juniper-trees, the fir-trees, the pine-trees, were mantled in white, so that when I stepped behind the barn, before bedtime, the little Colonial house would look like the glowing eye of a Kinokop lion, on a desert of salt, or like a fiery ruby on a white shroud. Often the

thermometer would drop below zero, and my beard would grow crisp with frost.

But what a rich, mellow quality the long evenings had, as we sat over a log-fire, reading from the edition of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* that I had borrowed from Mr. Seldes ! How the wind, like a famished timber-wolf, with frosted belly, would howl round the corners of the house, denuding every apple-tree bough of its fell of snow, fells which that afternoon had given the branches the appearance of the antlers of innumerable stags come down to take shelter behind the wall ! The cat would sit on the four-poster bed, watching its shadow on the wall ; and across the boards of the attic above, where we had found, behind a heap of rubbish, the broken frame of an old spinning-wheel, tiny feet would scamper. That winter I came to understand the peculiar character, rude and simple, that belongs to the countryside of old America. Indeed, as I trudged through deep snow to the little village post-office, I knew that I was abroad in an environment such as had bred John Greenleaf Whittier. This impression would be strengthened on the occasions when Mr. De Graff would call me into his kitchen and sit talking with me over his stove in an atmosphere thick with the greasy smell produced by daily cooking of portions of the barren cow he had slaughtered at the time when the last few apples were being carried down from his orchard on the hill. The old man would tell me about the bear he had seen as he was coming back from Snake Quarry late one evening, about a skunk he had trapped, or about the great blizzard in the Eighties, when the snow had drifted as high as the roof of his house. He also affirmed, when

our conversation turned to sickness, that nothing *Montoma* was more beneficial for the kidneys than a jorum of juniper berries. I spoke of the spinning-wheel I had found in the attic, and at once he vigorously asserted that no wool was better than homespun wool, and showed me the socks he was wearing, which had been made out of the fleece of a ewe that he had bred on the farm, and that he remembered quite well, though it had been dead God knows how many years. One evening this good man, standing up in his homespuns, took out of his cupboard a Bible that had belonged to his great-grandfather, and on the title-page of which it was possible still to read, in a large, round hand, the words, "De Graff, his Bible." "I would not part with that book," he said, "for five hundred, no, not for a thousand, dollars."

In the white moonlight, as we lay in bed, we would sometimes be waked by the yapping of a fox, making its way across the sloping field, its stealthy paws scarcely leaving an indent on the crisp, sparkling floor over which they trod. Once I witnessed a very curious scene. I awoke suddenly to find myself watching a skunk dancing an arabesque on a level space in front of the well, a lonely, silent arabesque, for the benefit of our cat, which sat before it with pricked ears. And as I watched this animal in its gambols, rolling over and over, and frolicking sideways, I could not but feel astonishment that God should have conceived the whimsy of giving so quaint an animal so merry a heart.

Early in the new year came the total eclipse of the sun; and although this celestial phenomenon meant very little to Scofield Thayer, who observed it through a pair of Newmarket field-glasses,

standing between Paul Rosenfeld and Dr. Watson, somewhere in Central Park, yet to us, in our lonely habitation, it was as if we had been permitted to glimpse the appalling accuracy of the material Universe with the startled eyes of sleepers suddenly awakened.

We stood on a heaped-up bank of snow, like two trapped rodents who, for once, in an illuminating moment, were allowed to see how the intricate hinges of their iron cage move. With wide-open eyes we stood there, while in all their august majesty the silent workings of the sidereal heavens lay exposed to our vision. If the voice of God himself, with husky, hallowed intonation, had come echoing over those frozen fields, we could not have been more amazed. This was something that reduced all our plaints about Death to an absurdity ; this was something that reduced our lives to tiny markings on a level plain, markings of as little import as the markings left by the tails of the field-mice which I used to notice in the snow in front of the barn. There we stood, two live, intellectual souls, marooned in a mathematical cosmos from which there was no way of escape. And as the light of the sun went out, with my own eyes I saw the face of my mother, the tender earth, tremble as though she had been smitten. Small wonder that Mr. De Graff said to me, as with grave deliberation he collected my letters, "It makes a man think, to see such sights as that." As he uttered these words he gave me from under his steel spectacles a puzzled, significant look, as though deep in his heart he suspected the unwisdom of the modern world in neglecting any longer to treat with reverence the musty volume in his cupboard.

Little by little, signs of the spring appeared. *Montoma*
First a dozen honey-bees emerged from their hives
and in a kind of hypnotised state hovered, like tiny
hawks, about the warming timber of the post-office
door. A few weeks passed, and, behold, once more
the miracle had happened. Out of the warped
earth, out of the dead, soaked mould, sprang a
hundred dainty blossoms, blossoms more graceful,
more rare, than gleaming sea-shells. Anemones,
foam-fair and fairy-free, hepaticas, whose tender
stems were covered with tiny hairs, and spring-
beauties that make all lovers long "to be in bed
again." And now, as the sun rose higher and
higher out of the wide Titian landscape, the summer
birds came back. The hoarse croaking of solitary
crows gave place to other sounds, and once again
robins stepped through the young spring grass,
scattering dew-drops. Indeed, there was no scrap
of the ancient soil that was not astir. One had
only to lift up an old board, near where the skunk
danced, to find concealed, amid a hundred pale
spears struggling upwards, five naked lizards, still
covered with primeval slime.

At a particular period in this happy transition,
when, in spite of the sun-warmed days, it still froze
at night, the De Graffs hung buckets about the
trunks of their sweet-maples, so that as one walked
by their farm there was scarcely a tree which had
not a receptacle being filled, drop by drop, with
pellucid sap.

But strange to say, the ancient enchantment of
the season filled me only with restlessness. I had
been in America for five years, for as long a time as I
had spent in Africa ; and now, as the swallow turns
toward its familiar barn, as the cuckoo turns again

*The Verdict
of Bridlegoose*

to its buttercup pasture, so my heart turned toward England. Before this I had not had the slightest wish to see my own land ; but suddenly, in spite of —perhaps because of—all this beauty, my bowels languished for home, I longed for the smell of West Country hedges, for the smell of bramble-leaves and dock-leaves and ditch-cool grasses, limp with the soft, enervating, odorous dampness of an Island night in June.

DEPARTURE

DURING my last week in New York City, I went to spend an evening with Arthur Davison Ficke. The debonair, cosmopolitan rogue lived in low-raftered rooms at the bottom of a blind street, and it tickled my heart to see him there with his books all about him and a good decanter on the table. In the dim-lighted library, with his tall, slender lady at his side, one could not but commend a certain kind of worldly sagacity, capable of dealing sharply with life, so that even poor poets may on occasions loll at ease, as though in a fenced city. For I would have all my friends as sly and generous as my lord! Then would many of us poor wretches have harbourage in winter and no longer be fed on melon-rind and the meagre pips of pomegranates. Once, when I was spending an evening in the home of that other honourable defender of the oppressed, Dudley Field Malone, Ficke, for a whim, because forsooth it was a dark night, presented me, out of hand, with his own walking-stick, a gift that I treasure to this hour, and hope to treasure even unto the last days of my life, when under the providence of God, with my hair white as hoar frost, I totter out to the harvest field to watch another generation than mine gather in the golden grain of life.

Later in the evening, Edna St. Vincent Millay came in. I had not seen her for four years, but I found her unaltered. She possessed the same fragile appearance, the same brittle, shell-like, petal-like appearance that had always set me marvelling.

*The Verdict
of Bridlegoose*

And her lovely leprechaun eyes, yellow-green in colour, had the same strange light in them that I had observed at first, like the light of baffled mistrust in the eyes of an infinitely desirable mer-maiden who finds a crowd of alien creatures looking down at her through a glass-bottomed boat in some deep, seaweed-waving, rock-engrottoed pool near the coral cliffs of Bermuda.

We spoke of the eclipse, and she referred to the forlorn aspect that the world wore during those moments of semi-darkness, making use of the word "desolate" in such a way that, even as I sat in my luxurious chair, I had a vision of the derelict earth, lost in space, but still carrying on its face its unhappy burden of men and cattle.

At last the hour came for our embarkation, and we sailed down the proud harbour, past the Battery, past the Statue of Liberty, past Staten Island. Little by little the embattled ambit of the great city faded behind us. I felt heavy at heart. With the English deck-steward fussing about with his chairs behind me, with his wooden, uncomfortable chairs, which even eight legs did not make long enough, I looked back at Manhattan, with a feeling of infinite regret and infinite devotion for this great new country that out of its careless largess had given me what my heart desired.

I cannot say that my travelling-companions contributed anything to my enthusiasm. They sat all day long in crowded rows, under the officious eyes of their avaricious servants, grumbling that the White Star Line should have thought fit to allow a negro company of actors and actresses berths outside the steerage. When half a dozen lusty blacks began to pipe to half a dozen negro girls in a hidden

part of the deck, their indignation knew no bounds. *Departure*
I, for one, did not share their prejudice, but liked very well to see these little wenches, limber and light, dance under the moon. Indeed, their sing-song refrain, "Grab yo' girls, don't get rough," kept repeating itself in my mind long after I had fled to a deserted deck in the steerage, where I found I could escape from the obsequious eyes of the stewards, and from the mean eyes of the other passengers, who made me feel, as I walked past them, with my old plaid shawl that used to belong to Edward Fitzgerald, over my shoulders, as though I were being gazed at by a flock of carnivorous sheep.

A HEADLAND REFUGE

WE came up the Channel at midnight ; so that it was not until the hour before dawn that I was waked by the lowering of the anchor, and looked out of my porthole at England. There she lay in her unrivalled loveliness, virginal and unspoilt. The sea that encircled her rocks, that lapped against the smooth pebbles of her beaches, was still and calm, as still and calm to look upon as the flocks which I could see grazing in the small green fields of Devonshire. At that unequalled hour, with a fishing-boat gently rocking against a sky already streaked with red, with the cold seaside air coming in through the round brass-bound aperture, I was able to contemplate my native land with detachment. There she lay, in her sturdy beauty, with her cottages dotting the hillside like moss-grown, lichenized stones, with her sloping uplands golden with gorse, and with her elm trees already out in tender May-time leaf.

By the following evening I was on the White Nore, the wildest, proudest headland of all the Dorset coast. Except for the hum of a bumblebee, sipping honey from a patch of vipers-bugloss, there was no sound save that of the sea murmuring round rocks six hundred feet below.

To the left were downs, rising and falling, one behind the other, as far as St. Aldhelm's Head. Everywhere against the skyline were visible the immemorial burial mounds of the men of the old time. I saw also in the distance the hill which I knew overlooked Corfe Castle—Corfe Castle, with

its Norman keep haunted by shining jackdaws, still standing after eight hundred years, its very robe-guards, the turreted drought of the medieval lords and ladies, still visible above the moat. Yet all that had happened to me since I last looked for tracks outside the badger-hole in Middle Bottom, all that I had seen, and all that I had heard, had been contained, so I found, within the compass of the lifetime of a cat, of my brother's sandy cat, Peter Paul, old now, it is true, but still able to enjoy an afternoon's sleep in the long grass under the sycamore.

I walked to the very edge of the cliff and looked over. Far below, at the foot of a ledge grown with samphire, I could see a dozen foolish guillemots drying their wings in the last rays of the sinking sun. On a ledge much higher up, not more, so I judged, than a hundred feet from where I was standing, a cormorant sat becking at me with its long black-green head outstretched, for all the world like Chaucer's pardoner. And because of a certain quality in that evening air, a quality nameless, absolute, indefinable, I knew that for a surety I was home once more.

THE END

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